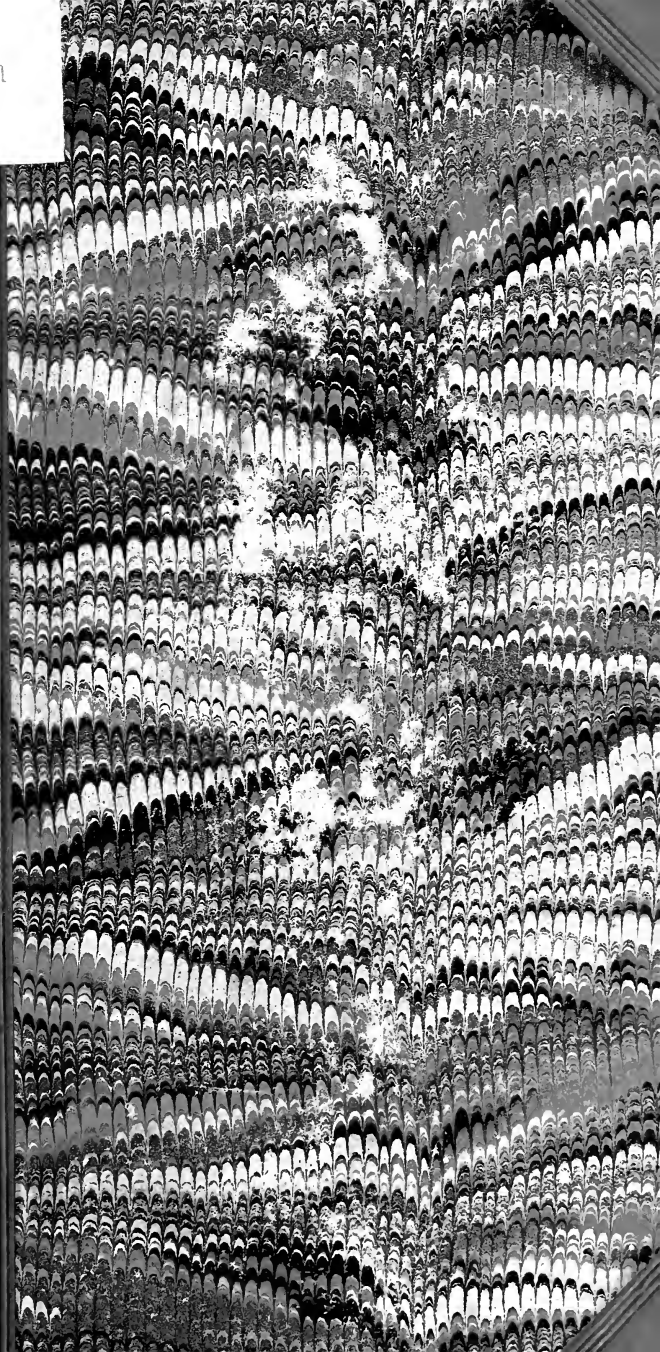


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THE HEIRESS;

A NOVEL.

"She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes."—*Byron*.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON :

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
(SUCCESSOR TO HENRY COLBURN.)

1833.

J. B. NICHOLS AND SON, 25, PARLIAMENT-STREET.

THE HEIRESS.

CHAPTER I.

Avec les gens qui par finesse écoutent tout, et parlent peu, parlez encore moins : ou, si vous parlez, dites peu de chose.

LA BRUYERE.

He comes ! he comes ! in glorious style !

SHANNON AND CHESAPEAKE.

THE next morning, before they had left the breakfast table, Lord Alford was announced. "More than a thousand and one welcomes!" said Helen, yielding both her hands to his grasp, whilst her looks spoke her thanks.

"I suppose, from your early visit, you have brought the flowers," remarked Mrs. Hargrave, pettishly : "I am sure I shall have cause to rejoice, for I have heard of nothing else. 'Are they come?' was her last question at night; her first in the morning."

Helen coloured ; Alfred smiled, and declaring himself to be the bearer of the flowers played the agreeable to the old lady, till

he restored her to good-humour. The flowers were brought in and duly admired, and Helen and her visitor proceeded to the garden, after an admonition from Mrs. Hargrave, to remember that Robert was to be there at twelve.

“Now, *ma belle*,” said Alford, “for the memory of our by-gone days of childish frankness, give me a clue to unravel this mystery, for my wit can only enable me to read half the riddle. Oh, Helen! Helen! I verily believe some horrid spell rests in these dark woods of yours. Dormer raced through them from north to south, from east to west, day after day, and always returned looking as if he had explored the Trophonian cave. The day before yesterday he came back in such a mood, that (thanks to Catherine’s tormenting questions), if Spanish patriotism had not been out of fashion with the Tories, ‘War to the knife!’ must have been proclaimed between them. Then, yesterday he started from Feldon (thanks to my discretion), with something of a bright look; and lo, behold! he leaves your woods looking as if he had been hanged for burking, or theft, or some such ungentlemanly crime, and was speeding to the abode of the condemned. Nor has the spell worked only upon him. The very name of Hurlestone makes Euston look like a

stormy bear, outrageous at being placed in the Zoological Gardens; and even I have no sooner entered its limits, than I feel inclined to quarrel with '*La Belle et La Bonne.*' Helen," he continued more seriously, "what amends can you make for having traversed my favourite project, and destroyed the peace of my dearest friend?"

"Do not quarrel with me," said Helen, raising her beautiful eyes to his, with the large tears standing in them ready to overflow at a look. "You cannot grieve for this matter more deeply than I do; but his passions are wild and fearful, and they alone must prevent his enjoying peace. My manner might have saved him what he termed the disgrace of a refusal."

"I cannot quarrel with you, Helen, were it only for those kind tears, but you must not think Dormer blames you; he sends me to say all you can require, and to deliver his parting wishes and adieus."

"Is he gone then?"

"He is: but may I hope, from that sigh and tone, that his departure is not unregretted?"

"Were I to say it was not, you would give too strong a meaning to my words. I'd not wish that we should meet again, at least not yet; but I do wish that we had parted in kindness."

"Yet you feel no anger."

"None!"

"Then may not time and assiduity effect some change? His love is not to be rejected as a thing of little worth. Say it was a fear of Euston's violence, that influenced your rejection."

"No! no! To his own violence, not Robert's, he owes the decision. I should soon learn to tremble in his presence, and he would brook woman's fear as little as her opposition. If I have suffered, I may thank myself for listening to his eloquence after the first warning. Why did he not write an apology for yesterday's violence, but that his pride could not stoop so low."

Alford looked disconcerted, for his friend had refused to take pen in hand, notwithstanding his entreaties.

"Come! come!" said Helen, half smiling at his confusion: "leave your friend to himself. He has been too much flattered and petted, to bear a first disappointment with any tolerable degree of patience; but time will soften the remembrance, pride heal the wound, and we may yet be friends. If you had seen him at our two last meetings, to forget all before, you could not blame my decision."

"Something about a whining beggar, was

there not? For I durst not question Dormer, and his ravings were not very intelligible. That a dirty piece of impertinence should step between me and my hopes!"

"If you feared then, what should I do hereafter?"

"Well! well! Perhaps you are right; and vexed as I am, I own he is scarcely worthy of you."

"We will talk no more then on this painful subject; but let me render you a thousand thanks for all your kindness."

"Not a thank, for I would keep the debt undiminished, and will hear of nothing more material than smiles. No looking saucy, and appearing to think the service light. I would almost as soon attempt to tame a pair of full grown lions to run in my curricule, as undertake to calm Robert Euston, when in one of his fiery moods. But for your note, and my consequent caution, yesterday's pastoral might have been converted into a tragedy. Euston's ill-humour was intolerable: first, he seemed out of sorts at the chance of your being there; and then he seemed still more out of sorts at your not being there; and so difficult was it to prevent his affronting Dormer, despite all my devices and strange manœuvres, by which I acquired the character of a madman, that I

much doubt my success if Percy had not left the field. When Euston discovered his absence, and I suppose guessed his errand, he was like a madman, and would have endangered the lives of himself and his steed, with his haste to reach Hurlestone—to say nothing of you and Dormer—had I not taken care, that by some unaccountable mistake, his horse should be at least four miles distant. I tell you what, Helen, his insolence is intolerable, and the world says you bend before his fury or his love; now I claim as a reward, that you think and act for yourself, and promise never to become Mrs. Euston.”

“Do you seek to pain me as well as others?” asked Helen sorrowfully.

“Never!” replied Alford warmly, looking at her pale cheek and falling tears. “I am quite ashamed of my ill-humour; but Euston provoked me. I ask no promise, only let me advise you as a brother. You do not love your cousin, and he is no fitting guide for you.”

“Must I invest you with that office?” said Helen, smiling through her tears.

“I fear you are too wise,” smiling in return; “but, scatterbrain as I may be, I am a perfect Solomon when you are concerned. Why is Euston coming here at twelve?”

She gave him a softened account of part of what had passed, and ended by saying: "Now, that your friend has left the neighbourhood, you need not fear my acting freely, firmly, and fearlessly. So do but retain your good humour, despite Robert's tantrums, and I will apply to you in all my difficulties."

"Thank you, my second sister, Helen. Who knows but with such a hope, I may acquire the wisdom and steadiness of a Lord Chancellor. But time wears, and I have no wish to encounter your visitor, with whom you may be as firm and penetrating as you please. I must wish your aunt good morning, though I perceive she would rather see you Mrs. Euston than Lady Alford, and your cousin has his periodical fits of jealousy."

"Who sees deeper than the surface now, Alford? No one sees deeper than you. This is no news."

"Perhaps not; but, should I ever have any thing to conceal, I must shun your presence."

"Tell it at once with a good grace, and then you need not avoid me."

"I will think about it. Adieu!"

As Alford left Hurlestone Park by one gate, Mr. Euston entered it by another. Helen received him alone, returned a cold bow to his polite good morning; and thanks, almost as

cold, for his kind enquiries concerning her health, after which neither spoke for some time. Helen had armed herself with all the coldness and firmness she could summon, to meet and over-awe his expected vehemence; but there was no vehemence with which to contend. He had acquired too good information as to Dormer's movements, to find any difficulty in conjecturing the truth; and the removal of all his fears on this point, joined to shame, and and the apprehension lest Helen might prove inexorable, made him as humble and as willing to promise every thing, as the most *exigeant* tyrant could have desired. With such dispositions on one side, and no inclination to be harsh on the other, a repentant apology was made, and accepted; but not without the fullest understanding, that Helen's had been no idle threat, and that she was, and would remain, unfettered and uncontrolled. All again looked bright and promising; but Helen's very firmness and penetration forbade her to forget in the instant, and a doubt for the future still lingered on her mind, somewhat marring the pleasure of the present, and checking the open frankness of their intercourse.

That day he spent at Hurlestone; the next he attended the election, when Mr. Howard was declared duly elected—the show of hands in his

favour being so great, that Mr. Smug declined a contest; and the day after he returned to town.

He had not long taken his leave, when, to Helen's surprise, Lady Catherine Alford made her appearance; and to her still greater astonishment, announced her intention of spending the day with her.

"Never trouble about making fine speeches," she continued; "there is an electioneering dinner at Marston, or I should not have come here. But you know I detest Port wine and politics, greasy freeholders, and grumbling expectants."

"Very well, then," replied Helen, smiling, "I shall only be commonly civil; but tell me how dear Lady Marston and your brother are?"

"My mother and Alford are as usual, the one suffering from patience, the other suffering from impatience. He holds this dinner in as much abhorrence as I do, and I am mistaken if he will not have terrified my father, and mystified his guests, before the first remove. By the way, Alford wanted me to bring a note, but I could not wait for it; yet I promised to say to you 'that a riddle should be explained but to one, and that if he said more, a child would understand him.' His message puzzled

one of larger growth, for this is an unknown tongue to me ; but I suppose you comprehend it."

" Indeed I do not, so you must take back my request for an explanation."

The morning passed in looking over Helen's portfolio, with a due portion of caustic remarks from Catherine, and playful parryings from her hostess. Mrs. Hargrave remained with them, contrary to her usual custom, and Helen could not but fancy her guest seemed to feel her presence as a restraint.

" Here are the Joneses!" cried Catherine, hastily. " Come and walk with me directly, Helen. If we stay, you will let her in because she is poor ; and if I remain, I must be rude ; and one may as well endure a political dinner, as one of your homilies, Mrs. Jones, and the sentimental blonde. You have such a marvellous regard for the poor, one would think you had been a pauper. I verily believe you would rather affront a countess than a commoner."

Catherine's remarks were, for some time, more entertaining and less bitter than usual, till, complaining of fatigue, she threw herself on a seat, and insisted on Helen's occupying another, so as to allow her a full view of her face.

“ Now I think of it, Helen,” she began, abruptly, “ when are you to be Mrs. Euston? Remember, I shall expect to be bridesmaid. Don’t blush, child, and deny it; the whole county considers it a settled thing.”

The abruptness of the question, and the look which accompanied it, amazed Helen, aware as she was that the young lady seldom spoke without a purpose. Alford’s message came to her mind, and from that instant she was on her guard.

“ The whole county must consider what it pleases, as I shall issue no placard on the subject; but Robert knows better, and I know better, and you know better,” she added, looking steadily at her.

“ Not I, indeed; you never made me your confidante, and as all the folks at Feldon said it was to be, and your cousin looked as black and fierce as a stormy November night, when I delivered your excuses, of course I thought what all the folks said was true. *De plus*, it appeared he had been with you late the night before, so I concluded the head-ache was a feint to hide your blushes. A very bad habit, that of your’s, by the way, and amazingly inconvenient sometimes,” keeping her eyes fixed full upon her the whole time she was speaking.

“ It would be to you,” replied Helen, meet-

ing the look with one as fixed ; “ but I have no occasion for concealment, nor was I sufficiently versed in affairs of this sort, to understand that bidding adieu to a lady at ten in the evening, and being in an ill humour the next morning, was the sign of an approaching wedding.”

“ Then it really is not so ? Tell the truth ; you know I detest the Miss-ish manœuvres customary on those occasions.”

“ It would be an affront to your penetration to repeat the denial.”

“ Well, as your favourite, Mrs. Jones, says, when obliged to disbelieve a tit bit of scandal, ‘ There really is no giving credit to any thing one hears ! ’ But if not yet, I always set it down as certain that it will be. Talking of Mrs. Jones, what do you think is her last pet piece of news ? She absolutely tries to make people believe that Mr. Percy Dormer, the heir of an ancient earldom, the admired of all admirers, the eloquent, the fastidious, the Cynosure of female eyes ; to sum up all, Dormer the Superb, who might play the Turk, and sport a harem, did he not too much value his own repose, flew hither on a hyppogriffe, or some such animal, from Feldon ; placed his hand, his heart, his fortune, and himself, at the disposal of Miss St. Maur ; and—was refused ! Fortunately, the utter folly of such a report, and

the impossibility of such a thing having occurred, will prevent any one's giving it a moment's credit."

"That is fortunate!" remarked Helen, calmly. "It is a pity but all her stories carried an antidote with them."

Catherine looked baffled for a moment, and then continued—"It is a pity, as you say, that all her stories are not as marvellous as this, and then none could credit them. Yet I understand this is but half the story, and that there is something about Alford's coming over the next morning to plead his cause, and Mr. Euston arriving just after, to insist on an explanation."

"Quite a romance," remarked Helen, as quietly as before. "I should not be surprised, after what I heard, if she were to discover that you had come over in a fit of jealousy, to learn the truth and threaten to poison me; that would be a proper finale."

"Is that a snake?" screamed Lady Catherine, starting from her seat.

No snake was to be discovered, and when they were again seated, there was no trace of emotion on Catherine's features.

"What were we talking of before this interruption? Oh! I recollect now! It would be but just to Mr. Dormer, Helen, and a point

of delicacy in you, to contradict the report publicly, and authorize your friends to do the same."

"I have too great a horror of publicity, to put forth an advertisement on the subject; but should Mrs. Jones presume to mention the subject to me, she shall not escape without one of the homilies of which you stand in so much dread; and, should you hear it mentioned, you will, of course, demonstrate its utter impossibility."

"Then, you authorize me to declare every where, no offer has been made?"

"Such an authority would be admitting the possibility of what you have declared to be impossible; and silence brings the most expeditious death to a report."

"Ha! I detect a blush, and begin to fear the poor moth thinks it may live in the blaze of the girandole."

"Ha! the lip quivers! Has not the poor moth already burnt its wings, and thus warns from experience?"

This was carrying the war into the enemy's quarters, and Catherine said, angrily, "I should quarrel with this folly, did I not pity the delusion which it reveals. Dream not of Dormer's return, still less of his bending to you. I have heard him say nobility should wed

with nobility, and thus the honourable stream be kept untainted with meaner blood. Depend upon it, he will marry from ambition."

"He has my best wishes for his happiness, let him wed with whom he may; and, but that you are too wise to place your hopes on a volcano, I should be inclined to think the imagined ending to Mrs. Jones's story was not as impossible in your eyes as the commencement."

"You are angry, my dear," said Lady Catherine, making this false assertion in the contemptuous tone of assumed superior calmness. "I am sorry for it; but our long friendship must excuse my impertinence in giving you a warning, and I shall contradict the report, in your name, lest you should be accused of indelicacy, and the vanity of wishing the idea to be believed."

"I have no dread of being accused of either, and doubt if the report has spread as widely as you seem to intimate. I suspect Mrs. Jones has paid the penalty of her usual gossipry, and been accused of saying more than she really has."

Helen's penetration again won a confirmation of her surmise; and Catherine, weary of a losing game, said with pretended carelessness: "If you do not claim a monopoly of all the

doubts this morning, perhaps you will allow me to indulge in one as to the prudence of my remaining longer here."

- "There can be no doubt as to its imprudence," replied Helen, unable to suppress an arch smile; "you find it too keen."

Catherine favoured her with a stare, meant to express: "What do you intend by saying this to me?" Then drawing her shawl around her, and criticising, without much charity or politeness, the growth and arrangement of trees, shrubs, and flowers, she walked towards the house, with the intention of gaining from Mrs. Hargrave the information so provokingly kept back by Helen. Here again she was defeated, for a friend of that lady's joined the party at dinner, and prevented any further exercise of her questioning powers.

The practised deceiver had arrived with the certainty of winning the knowledge she desired; yet, did she return home with the mortifying feeling, that she had revealed something and learnt nothing; that the practised had been seen through, and thwarted by the unpractised; and that good feeling and feminine delicacy had enabled one who scorned deceit, to withstand taunts and gibes, and baffle the deceiver.

As she took her leave, she asked, "Shall we meet you on Friday, at the Carletons? A grand display, I conclude from the long notice, of

talking and tartlets, bustle and bonbons, with the garnishing *niaseries* of my son John and his horse Conqueror, and my daughter Harriet. I understand you pique yourself on doing the pretty, and playing popular; and Alford horrified my grave papa by saying, ‘If you stood for the county, you would certainly be returned;’ so to give you a piece of advice, have your band put on too high or too low, or commit some such momentous *faux pas*—for the best way to win her favour is, to furnish her with an opportunity of improving; but, I forgot you knew her before.”

“I thank you for this hint; with a few more of your instructions I shall become mistress of the art.”

“No doubt. Good night!”

“On what subject were you conversing so earnestly,” inquired Helen of the Misses Carleton, Jones, and Mahon, as she descended from her carriage, and walked with them up Mansford Hill.

“On what could it be, but of the new occupant of Colville Lodge?” replied Miss Mahon, the pleasing and unaffected daughter of an affected and manœvering mamma.

“But who may this expected occupant be? for I know nothing of the matter.”

“Then pray do not proclaim your ignorance.

for I doubt if even Miss St. Maur would not be less thought of at the present moment than the poorest person in the land, possessing the memory to relate, or the talent to invent, a new anecdote of this expected."

"I owe you no thanks for this mortifying intelligence, particularly as you have afforded me no enlightenment as to the sex, name, or condition, of this hero or heroine who is to be."

"I concluded your penetration had discovered the sex; then, for the condition, none in a lowly state are anxiously expected; and for the name, there is a something in it so irresistibly euphonious, that I accuse Miss Jones of having had some share in its invention. Guess, guess, guess?"

"I am the worst hand in the world a riddle-me-ree, so take pity on my feminine curiosity, and tell me the name of this new *Louis le desiré*."

"It was in very pity that I withheld it, seeing the fearful effect it has produced on two of my friends; but, since you will tempt the danger, the risk be on your own head. Allow me to introduce you, nominally, to the Hon. Reginald Fitzgerald de Roos, only son of Baron Fitzallan, of Fitzallan Castle, in the county of Northumberland. And now tell me what effect this talismanic name has produced?"

“As much surprise and wonderment as you could have anticipated. What can induce Mr. de Roos to settle himself in the country, before the shooting or hunting season; but I suppose he only intends remaining a few days?”

“Oh yes, he is to remain six months at least!” exclaimed the young ladies at the same moment; and then Miss Carleton, in her usually flighty manner, detailed all she had heard concerning the new-comer.

“Mr. Wheeble has lent him the house for a twelvemonth, and his horses and servants are come down, and he is expected himself to-day or to-morrow; and he is very handsome, and very elegant, and very rich, and all the ladies are in love with him; but they say he is very particular, and that his wife must be perfect; and they say too, he is very lively, and a beautiful waltzer; and that he will make the place quite gay, for he is very fond of female society, and will give lots of parties. I am so glad, for it is very dull and stupid!”

“But what is his inducement for coming here at all?” again inquired Helen.

“I understand,” replied Miss Jones, in a sentimental tone, “he says he is weary of the gaude and glare of pomp and pride, and heartless nothings of the great world; and that he has long sighed to wander amid the sylvan

scenes, or recline beneath some umbrageous oak, the giant of the forest, listening to the gentle murmur of streams, the bleating of the fleecy flocks, or the delicious warbling of the nightingale."

"Indeed!" said Helen, laughing incredulously, "a most marvellously simple taste for an admired young man about town, heir to a title. It is to be a second edition of *Arcadia*, I see; so I conclude we must all sport croaks, and transform ourselves into *Phyllises* and *Damarises* of those innocent times. Permit me, young ladies, to offer you the choice of all my flocks, and I will speak to the steward to have a sheep-washing for the occasion. But amongst your enumeration of his accomplishments, you forgot to mention his singing *Moore's* most tender ditties to perfection."

"Does he? Then you know him?"

"Only by report."

"What did you hear of him?"

"Just what a missy flirty girl of seventeen, who had had no mother to guide her, might be expected to say of a handsome, lively, and elegant young man of six-and-twenty, heir to a title, and universally admired; and who, above all, had said and looked more than one specious flattery about the languishing lustre of her dark eyes."

“ Ah, Miss St. Maur ! ” said Miss Jones sentimentally, “ you are laughing at us ; but though you have hitherto been all-sufficient to yourself, the time may yet come when you will feel the exquisite delight and enchantment of meeting with a sympathetic soul.”

“ All in due time,” said Helen, laughing ; though it might be that a thought of Dormer made that laugh a little less light than usual. “ But who comes here with his britzcha and four ? Your neighbourhood is become gay indeed. *Louis le désiré* himself, perhaps ? ”

All eyes were directed to the approaching carriage, and Helen repented having in her gaiety started the supposition, when she saw that the Misses Carleton and Jones were determined nothing should escape their observation. The hill, up which the young ladies were walking, was long and tedious rather than steep, bounded by high green banks on either side ; and from the nature of its material and the late dry weather, was almost ankle-deep in dust, except just at the edge, where there was a narrow green path. The bank was too steep to attempt to climb it, without its having the appearance of romping ; and aware of Miss Carleton’s inclination to turn the appearance into a reality, Helen forbore to make the at-

tempt, and made up her mind to bear the infliction with all the philosophy she could summon, though every movement of the rapidly-approaching britzcha raised such clouds of dust, that they endured the horrors of smothering by anticipation. Still she regretted she had not her parasol to protect her from the dust and the stare of the traveller, should he be inclined to return the prying looks of her two companions. But nothing seemed further from the traveller's mind than any act in the slightest degree discourteous. When the britzcha had approached near enough for Miss Carleton to decide, in far too loud a tone to please Helen, that its sole occupant was quite an Adonis; the traveller leant forward and gave the postillions particular orders to walk their horses past the ladies, and be careful not to dust them. The orders were strictly obeyed, and the look and slight inclination of the head, not amounting to a bow, as he came opposite to them, spoke so much of courtesy and respectful admiration, that the most critical must have approved.

"'Tis he, 'tis he!" almost screamed Miss Carleton, in her delight. "I saw the coronet on his carriage. I see he has just stopped your servant to ask who we are."

"Pray be a little more quiet, and not speak

so loud," said Helen, reprovingly, and trying to prevent the young lady from looking back.

"Nonsense!" replied Miss Carleton, pertly, "no one likes shy people; and for my part, I think they are always very stupid."

"There is a great difference between shyness and propriety."

"Oh, you are so very demure! If I had your fortune I would do any thing. I wonder what he said to the servant, and what he thought of us?"

"Neither can be very material to your peace of mind;" returned Helen, fearful she might question the domestics.

"I don't care; I should like to know. I am sure it was very polite in him to walk the horses, and he is very handsome; such eyes! and such hair! and such a beautiful eye-glass! I hope papa will call upon him."

"The air of graceful command with which he issued his orders, and the sympathy for human suffering which the silver tones of his clear and liquid voice exhibited, are proofs of his high descent, and delicate and enlightened mind. Then his chivalrous motto, '*D'Amour et Loyauté*.' Oh, I am sure he adores Byron, and Moore, and is full of sympathetic feeling and gentle sensibility."

“Of that there can be no doubt. With such a motto! and such an air! and such a voice! and such a pair of eyes! and such an eye-glass! he must be the epitome of romance and perfection!” said Miss Mahon, with much gravity, in answer to Miss Jones’s rhapsody, whilst Helen with difficulty repressed her laughter, as she added,—

“And I warn you in the words of some old ballad:—

‘Now I forbid ye ladies a’,
That wear goud in your hair,
To come or gang by Carter Ha’a,
For young Tam Lane is there.’

and if report speak true, the Hon. Reginald Fitzgerald de Roos is one,

‘Who bends his knee at every shrine,
And leaves his heart at none.’ ”

“Thank you for the warning. I can keep my own any day,” replied the flippant Miss Carleton, drawing herself up, and placing her enormous sleeves so as to make them look still more enormous. “Perhaps you speak from experience; I am sure Mr. de Roos will be ten times as agreeable as that Mr. Dormer people made such a fuss about, with his proud looks, as if we were only fit to be his slaves; and his voice, that was only heard once in an hour, like

a church-clock. I am sure I think there will be no comparison between them."

"I should imagine not," replied our heroine, without noticing her ill nature; "if Mr. Dormer spoke but once in the hour, like the church-clock, like that also his face and his words always conveyed valuable information."

At this moment they were joined by Mr. John Carleton, and almost before he had concluded his devoirs to the other young ladies, his sister began,—“Oh, John! you must call on Mr. de Roos. We have just met him, and he is so polite, and so agreeable, and so handsome, you can't think. We must cause papa to ask him on Friday.”

“I think I shall call upon him,” replied her brother, as he arranged his shirt collar, and then glanced at his well-booted leg, “for Johnson tells me he has got a horse very like my Conqueror, that won at Newmarket. It cannot be as handsome though, I am sure. Now I think of it, Miss St. Maur, you have never seen my horse Conqueror; an uncommon fine animal, I assure you! Come now, and I will show him to you.”

Again the temptation to laugh was almost irresistible; for she had seen the horse about twenty times, each invitation prefaced by the same speech. It had been his last question two

years since ; it was his first now. With some difficulty she suppressed the risible propensity, and having reached the top of the hill, and the gate to Mansford, she took her leave, accompanied by the two young ladies, whom she had offered to set down on her way home.

CHAPTER II.

Whate'er he did was done with so much ease,
In him alone 'twas natural to please ;
His motions all accompanied with grace,
And paradise was opened in his face.

DRYDEN.

Oh, wad some pow'r the giftie gie us,
To see oursels as others see us !
It wad frae monie a blunder free us,
And foolish notion :
What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us.

BURNS.

TIME has passed; and, behold! the day of Mrs. Carleton's grand dinner has arrived, and our heroine is on her way to attend it; but before she can reach Mansford, we must claim the old-fashioned privilege of introducing the place and its inhabitants. No sooner was the lodge gate passed, than an acute observer might have understood the character of the person who held the chief control over the grounds and buildings. There were rows of pales thrown down at opposite extremities of a long range, that it would have taken double

the number of workmen employed to put up in time to prevent the intrusion of sundry lean cows and half-starved ponies, which deserted the well-fed lanes and hedge rows for the more luxurious pasturage of the park, as an inclosure of forty acres was called. There were old trees marked for destruction, and some of their tops and lops encumbering the road, whilst young ones were withering to be planted, and scorching at the idea of such an unseasonable removal. There was a dab of mortar here, a pile of bricks there, a chimney begun, a garden wall in embryo, a stable half pulled down, and a coach-house in ruins. Who could be an hour in the society of Mrs. Carleton, and doubt that she held rule over the building and unbuilding, planting in and cutting down, paling, gravelling, and what not? She must have been descended from Thalaba the Destroyer. When first married, her means had been confined; but some five years since, a distant relation had left her husband forty thousand pounds, since which period she had been gradually increasing in dignity, at least in her own eyes, and now at times scarcely acknowledged a superior. Every thing that she censured must be faulty; every thing that she did, or counselled to be done, must be perfection. There could be no appeal from a decision of

hers—she was a Protestant Pope—an infallible chancellor. The emphatic “I say—I think—I did,”—forbade all hope of the revision of a sentence. In person she was very tall, and very thin; and having once heard herself called a fine woman, thereupon assumed a queen-like dignity, meant to overawe all meaner spirits. Then she had rather a taste for patronising, when it did not interfere with her own pleasures; there was a grandeur in the very idea that suited her royal mood. Possessing neither taste or tact, her imitations of fashion very nearly resembled travesties. Her rooms looked as if the modes of the last hundred years had been whirled round in a tourbillon, and allowed to remain just where they had alighted. The rich and the poor Mrs. Carleton were always clashing, and made a most ludicrous jumble.

Mr. Carleton was a rather good-natured, talkative man, yielding the management of things at home to his wife; who, as far as her powers would permit, was a practical illustration of Doctor Clarke’s recipe for happiness; for her irons were never out of the fire. Poker, fire-shovel, and tongs, were never allowed one moment to get cold. Mr. Carleton was besides a most indefatigable magistrate, thinking nothing of a ride of thirty miles to attend a justice meeting, deciding sometimes wisely, sometimes

unwisely, and only severe upon radicals, poachers, and wood stealers.

Their only son was a rather genteel, silly-looking young man, principally known to all the country as the owner of his horse Conqueror. This one idea seemed to have swallowed up every other, and to exercise unlimited mastery over his mind. His sister Harriet, who has already shown herself to be a flippant flirt, was a fine-looking young woman ; at least so the gentleman said, for she was tall and large,* the height of whose ambition was to gain admirers, and to be thought a wit and a dasher.

The house was a very irregular building, and had been added to under Mrs. Carleton's direction, till there was not a good room in it.

The other members of this dinner party were Mr. and Mrs. Daniell, who, with less fortunes, were more pleasant and elegant. The gentlemen were rival talkers and rival magistrates ; the ladies rival housekeepers, and sometimes rival improvers. Mrs. Daniell's temper was as superior to Mrs. Carleton's as Mr. Carleton's was to Mr. Daniell's. Besides these, there were the party from Marston ; and Mr., Mrs., and Miss Mahon ; he the most good-natured and

* N. B. As may be guessed, I am of tiny dimensions myself.

meddlesome of mortals, ever ready to assist, ever eager to procure, were it a commission or a cucumber, a monkey or a monarchy. With such a temper it may be imagined he sometimes thwarted his wife, who could scarcely perform the most common act without manœuvring. Besides exercising this tortuous talent, she enacted the part of the tender mother; and occasionally, when not too much crossed by her husband's meddling, the loving wife. The daughter has already been described as pleasing, amiable, and unaffected; the shrinking victim, but never the participator of her mother's plans.

Such was the party assembled at Mansford, with the addition of two or three unremarkable young men, when Miss St. Maur was announced. The usual salutations had been given and received; the usual questions put and answered; a more than usual bustle occasioned by the re-seating; the last month's weather had been discussed, as well a horrid murder, and an ingenious robbery; and still no dinner was announced.

There was a pause. One of the unremarkable young men tried to get up a conversation about a mysterious occurrence, but it fell to the ground after one or two short and stupid remarks. Symptoms of yawning appeared

amongst some of the company. The decision of a justice meeting was hurried over by Mr. Carleton; the "I say, and I said," of Mrs. Carleton was hushed, as she looked out of the window and fidgeted as much as her dignity would permit; even Mr. Daniell was silent, and Miss Carleton had ceased flirting; whilst Lady Carleton openly showed her disposition for sleep. All looked wearied and worried. Oh! the horrors of the half-hour before dinner in an ill-managed house, with an ill-assorted party and an intact host and hostess! A servant entered the room and whispered to his mistress. The lady frowned, uttered a monosyllable, dismissed him, and then tried to look grander than before. The gentlemen huddled closer together, for fear they should be called on to entertain the ladies; whilst the ladies themselves seemed sadly in want of the entertainment denied them. "Silence settled wide and still," and in the words of the American journalist, there was "a most awful pause." Each looked at the others, as if to ask why those others were silent; then all felt the awkwardness, and some tried to think of matter for discourse. But who, unblessed with supereminent genius, can discover any thing to say at the very moment when it is absolutely necessary something should be said?

There was a crash in the hall, as of the de-

molition of plates, and the cry of a dog. What a relief! Every face but one brightened up. A malicious observer might have fancied all assembled to have been china manufacturers, so revivifying was this destruction of crockery, on all but the lady of the house. A cloud came over her brow; her look became more queen-like, and she talked *at* her son John, instead of *to* him, her invariable custom when offended.

“I said some time ago, that Mr. John Carleton’s dog should not come into the house, but I find he is admitted still. It is rather an extraordinary thing, I consider, that my orders are not obeyed. Some people choose to have dogs in the house, but I say it is not a fit place for them;” and here the lady drew herself up with the air of an empress.

Mr. John Carleton paid no heed to these remarks, but gaining courage from the silence having been broken, amid the dissertation that ensued concerning the breaking of china by dogs, children, and servants, he advanced towards Lady Catherine, and having adjusted his neckcloth, and run his fingers through his hair, asked her if she rode as much as ever; and then, without waiting an answer, continued, “Now I think of it; talking of riding, you

never saw my horse Conqueror, that won at Newmarket. An uncommon fine animal, I assure you. He shall be brought round for you to look at."

"The lady yawned, then gave a stare,
Sudden! terrific! strange! and queer!"

and closed her eyes as if going to sleep, whilst the gentleman drew back, abashed and astounded.

"Most adorable Miss St. Maur," said Alford, who, by passing round the formidable female circle, had obtained a standing place behind her and Miss Mahon; "take pity on me, and lend me your fan, for the odour of burnt soups, and overturned fricandeaux, has distressed the extreme sensibility of my olfactory organs; and a syncope may be the consequence." Then fanning himself violently, he continued, "As this feast must be demolished, I vote for killing 'my horse Conqueror,' and trying to rival the Chevalier de Beaujeu in our ingenious modes of dressing him."

"Hush! hush! you will be overheard."

"Never fear, only look indifferent: that most fortunate of crashes has set every tongue going again. I am afraid 'the fat is in the fire' will turn out both a saying and doing. Why does not our hostess, as is her wont, begin

a tirade at the cook, and furnish us with the history of every one who has offered, been engaged, and dismissed, since she first kept house?"

"Will you never see the indecorum of ridiculing your hostess? By Miss Carleton's manner, I guess the cook is not in fault; but do try and appease Catherine, for I am sure she meditates being rude."

The caution came too late: that young lady had already turned to Mrs. Carlton, and was speaking in the blindest tone imaginable.

"My dear Mrs. Carleton, what apology shall I make for coming either an hour or a day too soon? and how can I sufficiently admire the patient politeness, with which you have borne an unfortunate *contre temps*?"

"I am obliged to you for your apology, Lady Catherine Alford," replied her hostess, endeavouring to make still longer her very long neck; "but it was totally uncalled for, and I trust no one has ever yet found me deficient in patience or politeness."

"I beg your pardon again," said Catherine in the same bland tone; "but I really thought we had not dined. You must forgive me: I am such an absent creature, I never think of any thing. Is it not time, Alford, to order the carriage! I have been so absent, I had quite

forgotten we have had dinner, and was only thinking what an immense time we had been waiting for it."

The weariness of delay had again nearly hushed the conversation, and this remark was lost on few. Some looked amazed at its cool impertinence, whilst some turned away to laugh. Mrs. Carleton's anger would have been awful, but the offender was an Earl's daughter, and one not to be attacked with impunity, so she contented herself with turning on her a look, which must have destroyed a nervous person, and then talking at her husband in a loud tone.

"I think some stand should be made against the increasing lateness of the hours. Mr. Carleton wished our dinner to be at half-past six, but I said 'No;' if people cannot eat a good dinner at six, they must not expect to be received at Mansford. Persons may think it fashionable to be late, but I say true politeness is to keep no one waiting. If I were Mr. Carleton, I should order dinner immediately;" and having delivered this attack with all due emphasis and dignity, she half rose, spread out her voluminous dress so as to occupy a much larger space; and then, placing her hands before her, looked very grave and very grand.

"Here he comes!" cried Miss Carleton joyfully.

“Who comes?” asked many voices.

“The Honourable Mr. De Roos!” replied the young lady pompously.

“Whew!” whistled Lord Alford. “Now it comes out! Wait three quarters of an hour for a Baron’s son: it must be an hour for an Earl’s at the least.”

“Hope it not!” said Helen laughing, “or you may chance to lose your dinner. Your tormenting humour will never allow you to rival this new hero.”

“Now shall you be plagued with my society at dinner, for this impertinence.”

The appearance of the long-expected guest had again set every tongue in motion, and question and answer, in accordance with the different moods of the different speakers, converted the drawing-room at Mansford into a minor Babel.

“I wonder if he is a magistrate?” said Mr. Carleton.

“De Roos! De Roos!” murmured Lord Marston. “I wonder what are his political connections.”

“A new comer! He must want a great many things,” said Mr. Mahon; “I must assist him.”

“What an ugly habit you have of stooping, my dear,” whispered Mrs. Mahon to her

daughter, as she tucked in a string and arranged her scarf.

But little time was allowed for question or answer. Four horses whirled on the carriage with thought-like speed, and before conjectures were half exhausted, the door was thrown open to its full extent, and the Hon. Mr. de Roos announced. Every tongue was hushed, every eye turned towards the door. Unacquainted with a single creature in the room, and aware, as he could not fail to be, that he would be looked on by all, the idea of his entrance might have terrified a shy man to death, and made even a bold one look awkward.

“ I mean to be spitefully critical on the *boo* and *debut* of this maker of waiters,” whispered Alford to Helen.

“ Will you never be charitable, or cease to terrify Catherine’s fashionable ears with your miserable puns? ”

“ Who can wash the blackamoor white? ”

It is most possible that others besides Alford were critically inclined; but no sooner had the stranger made his appearance, than criticism was disarmed. His slight and elegant figure was well attired, with scarcely the shadow of coxcombry. The most fastidious could hardly have found a fault; for whatever he wore, or whatever he did, instantly received the stamp

of propriety. His bow was grace itself—not studied, not formal, but elegant, animated, yet respectful. His manner, with all the ease of high birth and high breeding, was untinctured by pride or pretension. But what, perhaps, won him more favour than all besides, at least in the eyes of the young, was the wearing one arm in a sling, and having a long narrow black patch on his right temple. It was impossible to doubt, for an instant, that the delay had been involuntary, even before a word had been said in explanation; and yet scarce a moment elapsed ere that explanation was given, and the silver tones of his mellifluous voice, as Miss Jones would have said, must have convinced the most incredulous.

“How shall I express my regret, or hope for pardon, for having kept you waiting? I can only trust that the simple truth will gain my forgiveness. I was obliged to go to * * * * to-day on particular business, but should have been punctual, had I not been compelled to walk home, from the overturn of my carriage. I fear, instead of being so late, I should have sent an excuse; but I had not sufficient self-denial, to deprive myself of so much anticipated pleasure.”

The apology was nominally addressed to Mr. Carleton; but, as he spoke of “anticipated

pleasure," his eye glanced round the circle, and all felt themselves included.

Mr. Carleton said more than was requisite, and his lady was flustered in endeavouring to be sufficiently condescending.

"I hope you are not hurt?" burst from several lips.

"Nothing but a trifling scratch. I am quite ashamed to wear a sling, lest I should be suspected of seeking to appear interesting."

"How did the accident happen?" inquired Miss Carleton: then, before he had spoken six words, she screamed, "Dear me! how shocking! I am sure you are very much hurt; let me get you some *eau de Cologne*!"

"Permit me to detain you," as she was flying out of the room; "and do not, by my occasioning you trouble, really make me regret the trifling accident. My valet, who is no bad surgeon, has already dressed it."

"Dressed it!" screamed the young lady again; "then you are wounded! Dear me, how interesting!"

"Miss St. Maur," said Alford, in a low voice, "lend me your boa to hang myself in; I shall never otherwise be able to compete with this interesting stranger."

"Rather copy some of his courtesy."

“ *Et tu, Brute!* nay, then my doom is sealed.”

“ I hope you do not suffer ! ” said Mrs. Mahon, in her sweetest, most sympathizing tone, rendered still sweeter by a something almost approaching to a lisp. “ You should be very careful not to let any thing touch the wounded part. Caroline, my dear, move a little further that way, and let us make a quiet seat for Mr. De Roos between us. You really must let me prescribe for you. I had, unhappily, a long practice in these things, from nursing my poor brother, who was wounded at Waterloo.” Here she sighed piteously, and Mr. De Roos looked his thanks. “ Caroline, my sweet love,” she continued—but Caroline’s head was turned the other way, and before the mother could arrange matters to her satisfaction, the husband’s meddling marred the wife’s schemes.

“ Did you say you were wounded? Do, pray, let Mr. Pettigrew, our surgeon, look at it; these are not things to be trifled with. I have known one or two people die from neglected wounds. I will desire Mr. Pettigrew to call to-morrow morning. Did not you say your carriage was injured? I will send over my coachmaker, and if I can find time, I will ride over, and look at

it myself. I have some little knowledge in these affairs."

Then, before he could possibly receive thanks or denial, he turned to our heroine—"Ah, Miss St. Maur! I am so delighted. I have at last procured you the black and white mice you desired. I was sure I had heard of some in Cumberland, so I wrote to a friend in Sussex to write to another friend in Yorkshire, as I knew he had a relation in Cumberland; and he applied to the High Sheriff, who was a particular friend of his, and with great difficulty he succeeded in getting a couple; and Sir Charles Devereux has promised to bring them down when he returns from grouse-shooting. Ah, pray don't say anything about it. I never think of trouble, if I can serve a friend;" and he turned to console with Mrs. Daniell on not having yet been able to procure her cousin a cadetship.

"What in the name of all that is meddling, can you want with black and white mice!" inquired Alford of the laughing Helen, who was bending over a print to conceal her merriment. "Why the High Sheriff of Cumberland, and Sir Charles Devereux, will take you for an old maid or an idiot."

"I shall but share the fate of wiser people; great characters are rarely understood."

“ I cannot bear that any ridicule should attach to you. Did you really desire these animals ? ”

“ Far otherwise, and can only understand the matter by recollecting that, two years since, I told a story about black and white mice to little Laura Mahon.”

“ Then do tell the man you don’t want them.”

“ Not now that he has had the pleasure of getting them. There cannot be much trouble in keeping a couple of mice, and it would be cruel to refuse them.”

“ You are too good-natured by half, Helen. I verily believe if the meddler got the High Sheriff of Cumberland to procure, and Sir Charles Devereux to bring down, a cap and bells, that you would wear them.”

“ No, I would transfer them to you ; ” said she archly.

“ I deserve that for trying to quarrel with you ; but, remember, I furnish a kitten to play with the mice.”

“ In pity don’t, for I have about a dozen already, bought from cruel boys.”

“ No wonder you wanted the mice then.”

The announcement of dinner put a stop to all further conversation. Here was a scene of bustle and confusion ! Some coming forward who should have hung back ; some hanging

back, who should have come forward; whilst the host and hostess, by giving contrary hints, made matters ten times worse. At length, Mr. Carleton led off Lady Catherine, and Lord Marston's proposition of the paired pairing, and leaving the single ones to their own inclinations, being agreed to, he himself gallantly led in the mistress of the revels.

"Come, Helen," said Alford, "I would not miss the scene of the placing at table for something." Away they walked, he turning back his head occasionally to mark the proceedings of those behind. Miss Carleton seemed to consider the stranger as her lawful prize, whilst he resigned himself to his fate without any apparent reluctance. There was the same scene of confusion on the seating in the dining-room, as there had been on the rising in the drawing-room. All the six hundred and fifty-eight members of the House of Commons, could not have caused more commotion in taking their seats. Mrs. Carleton wished for two titled supporters; whilst Mrs. Mahon warned her daughter first of the heat, and then of the cold, as Mr. De Roos passed from one side of the table to the other; and Mr. Mahon disoblged one-half of the company, by trying to oblige the other. At last, even Alford was weary of of the bustle, and afraid of being obliged to

change neighbours, exclaimed, "I vote that we sit as we stand."

"I second the motion," said Mr. De Roos, who was between Miss Mahon and Miss Carleton, and exactly opposite our heroine.

Amidst the laughter occasioned by this Irish proposition, the company were seated.

It has been said that the English meet to eat, and the French to talk; but in the present instance, tongue and palate were employed with such laudable impartiality, that it would have puzzled the most discriminating to have decided, whether the party was most French or English. The dinner, like the manners of the hostess, exhibited the assumption of grandeur without the reality, and was an attempt to engraft the ease, lightness, and elegance of the present day, on the hospitality, but stiff and lumbering substantiality of the past. But the delay had made the guests hungry; many of them had the neighbours they liked, and most looked pleased but Lady Catherine and the hostess.

"I never gave Mrs. Carleton credit for tact before," remarked Alford to Helen, secure of not being overheard, amid the clatter of plates, knives and forks; and the still louder clatter of tongues; "but the most inveterate enemy

could not deny her the praise of having fitted her dinner to her company. The most delicate morceaux, food for sylphs, are fainting at the contiguity of large ill-trussed joints, and the round of beef is weeping tears of blood, at having its dish garnished with cabbages; whilst good breeding is frightened from her propriety, at seeing the black unnapkined thumb of that burley groom intruding on those Sévre plates. So much for the body's food, now for the mind's. There is the fashionable and nonchalante Lady Catherine Alford, who occasionally holds wonder and animation *trop prononcés* to be elegant, bored with the 'sayings and doings' of country justices, and ragged vulgars on one side, and with the inane amazement of a simple youth at the sublime grandeurs of the Zoological Garden, 'Tam O'Shanter,' or some wax-work, on the other; whilst Mr. John Carleton has just offered to help her to a pâté, that he might say, 'Talking of pâtés, I remember Patie was the name of one of the horses that ran when my horse Conqueror won at Newmarket. A monstrous fine animal! I assure you. I will order him round that you see him.' I am convinced he insists on his mother's having the dish, that it may furnish an introduction to his favourite subject. Then

there is the delicate Mrs. Mahon, who talks of boiled chicken as almost too strong for her sensitive nerves, having something to manœuvre out of her host, has been obliged to allow a plate to be set before her, with a whole slice from the round of beef, two enormous carrots, and a whole head of cabbage. Worse! there is the elegant, the delicate, the refined, Mr. De Roos, who declares a woman should live on air, her motions be like the stately swan's sailing on a summer sea, her voice like the dying tone of a harp, and who, report says, never even from his birth imagined an inelegant thought, and whose speech flows as if modulated to the gentle breathing of the flute, condemned to the martyrdom of listening and replying to the shrill flippancies of an underbred flirt, and would-be dasher. Oh, the incongruities of such a dinner and such a party!"

"You have not enumerated a quarter," said Helen, half smilingly half reproachingly, "there is Lord Alford, who with one of the kindest hearts man ever had, abuses the hospitality of his host, by ridiculing himself and company at his own table; and, like his hostess, finds fault with all, and amends none."

"Who is severe now, Helen? But you interrupted me; there is Miss St. Maur with kindness in her looks, and essential salt of lemons

in her words, saying cruel things to an old friend, for the sake of two indefensible bores, and an insinuating coxcomb."

"Are you gone clean daft? as Catherine declared not an hour since; or have you a meaning?"

"Your question is complimentary; but I have a meaning. You have been so taken up with watching this interesting sufferer, as Miss Carleton calls him, that you have paid but a divided attention to all my clever things ever since we sat down to table."

"Then I suppose I must plead guilty, and trust to your mercy; for I own I have found something particularly interesting in Miss Carleton's sufferer."

"Have a care Helen, or I shall be jealous."

"You jealous!"

"Don't look so amazed! Jealous for Dormer."

Helen blushed, perhaps the more as she felt Mr. De Roos was looking at her; then rallying, replied "There must be no jealousy for him; we can never be other than we are; the warmest well-wishers."

"*Che sara, sara!*" said Alford, in a tone of vexation; "some wondrous charm dwells in a sling, it makes a coxcomb interesting, and a sensible man stupid."

"What spell is on you, that you cannot call

things by their right names?" replied she archly.

"He is a coxcomb," repeated Alford, rather loudly.

"My boa to your sable cloak, he is something more. Let us change the subject, for I suspect he is the Fine Ear of the fairy tale; but watch in your own careless way, and we will compare notes after dinner."

"Agreed. And now let me help you to this cabinet, whose ingredients seem as incongruous as the party."

"Hush, Alford!" exclaimed Lord Marston, whose political ear had caught the words cabinet and incongruous, "I should imagine—nay, I have every reason to think, indeed—no sensible man can entertain a belief, that any cabinet formed by his most gracious majesty can be incongruous."

"Indeed!" said the mischievous Alford, "then report speaks false; for it says that Lords P. and T. nearly came to fisticuffs in the very presence; whilst Mr. O. declared he must resign, for, that Lord R. was so very vulgar, he could not possibly act with him any longer."

Lord Marston's horror may be imagined, but cannot be described. A boxing match reported between members of the cabinet! A com

moner decline to act with a peer on account of his vulgarity ! And all this said by his own son, in the hearing of more than sixteen ladies and gentlemen, and five servants. His lordship absolutely shuddered, and felt all the horrors of the beheading, quartering, and fixing the limbs on the Tower-gate.

“ If you have any pity for me, Helen, faint ! My father looks quite awful, and I verily believe will commit me to the Tower, or the arms of Somnos.”

“ You have brought too bright a colour into my cheeks to give me a chance of success.”

“ Lord Alford,” began his father, in a tone tremulous from horror.

“ It comes, it comes,” whispered Alford, “ a diversion must be made at any risk ;” and with a dexterous movement of his hand, deemed by all but Helen, and perhaps Mr. De Roos, accidental, he overturned the wine-cooler into the lap of his next neighbour, one of the unremarkable gentlemen.

Up jumped the doomed to avoid the deluge, and by his awkward hurry occasioned the downfall of his plate, full of a rich gravy ; some portion of which splashed over the delicate Mrs. Mahon, whilst the backward movement of the first sufferer, forcing two footmen in contact, accomplished the demolition of two Sévre

plates, the spilling of their contents on the best carpet, and the extension of one of the men on the floor.

"A most magnificent diversion truly," whispered Helen; whilst Alford, aghast at the mighty mischief he had done, answered only by a deprecating look.

Lord Marston's speech came to an abrupt conclusion—some tittered—some laughed outright—whilst "What is the matter?" "How did it happen?" "I hope you are not hurt." "Take away the broken glass," &c. &c., mingled with the screams and gentle hysterics of the sensitive Mrs. Mahon, the apologies of the culprits, and the good-natured assurances of Mr. Carleton, some time elapsed before the bustle had subsided and the company were again seated.

"I have a capital receipt for mending china," said Mr. Mahon; "or, now I think of it, I can match your plates, and I will write about it this very evening. There is Jack Horton will do any thing for me. Going to Havre, I will get him to speak to Mr. Dashwood, to ask Colonel Jenkins, who is living near Sévre, to procure the plates for you."

"I am much obliged to you; but I will not give you that trouble," said the lady of the mansion, assuming more stately air than ever, and speaking for the first time since the *contre-*

temps, for she had only bowed to the apologies: "I said to my children that, if by any awkwardness the set were broken, I should not think of filling it up again; but, being humble, should content myself with English for the future. Some people think foreign china indispensable, but I say our own manufacture is good enough for me."

"It would be no trouble at all, I assure you," returned the persevering Mr. Mahon. "I shall be delighted to get them for you."

The lady looked still more stately, and said, as she bowed haughtily, "I thank you; but it is not my wish to have any. Miss St. Maur," she continued in the same lofty tone, "I am afraid you are in rather a perilous situation; you had better change places with my son John. John, change with Miss St. Maur."

"Pardon me, I am too well satisfied with my present situation to wish to change it," said Helen quickly, indignant at the lady's manner towards one, who, being poor, dependant, and withal very shy, felt every slight more deeply; and then turning in a kind manner to the blushing offender, she asked him to help her to some cream, gave him an invitation to dinner, and made a point of speaking to him several times during dinner.

"Just as you please, Miss St. Maur. I meant

to do you a service. I say it is very disagreeable to have anything thrown over one."

"Dear me! How very distressing the accident was," said Miss Carleton. "I hope you were not hurt! but you do look pale," addressing Mr. De Roos, whose meat she had insisted on cutting, and almost on putting into his mouth.

The gentleman answered the tender enquiry with all due gravity and gratitude, though it might have puzzled the most ingenious discoverer of things that are, or things that are not, to have found out any injury he could have sustained from such an accident, seated as he had been on the other side of the table.

"Mr. De Roos, let me help you to some cream. I have no idea of the quiet and gentlemanly being overlooked," said Mrs. Carleton, in her most condescending tone. "Some people say it should have three spoonsful of lemon juice; but I say that two are quite enough."

"Thank you, I will certainly try it, since you recommend it; but your daughter has taken such kind care of me, that I have had nothing to wish for."

"That woman, in her condescending moods, is like a turkey cock dancing a jig; and in her haughty ones, like an ape attempting the sublime."

“ Hush ! hush ! you are smarting from her *hauteur*, and have done quite enough mischief for one day.”

“ To be sure, things were carried a little further than I had intended ; but it will be well if no more mischief be done by the name of Alford. Catherine looks suspicious.”

“ She does, and might personify the French colour of *une arraignée qui médite un crime*. I can only hope that her contempt may save us from a storm.”

Nor was the hope vain ; that lady contented herself with yawning visibly and audibly, refusing every thing offered, mistaking all that was said, and occasionally shutting her eyes.

An incongruous desert succeeded to the incongruous dinner, and after Mrs. Carleton had required and received due praise for the grapes, a pine and a melon, and had given the history of each separate article, the ladies retired to the drawing room.

“ ‘ A horse, a horse ! my kingdom for a horse ! ’ ” exclaimed Catherine, as she made Helen join her on the lawn. “ Any thing to leave this den of *ennui*.”

“ You shall have Mr. John Carleton’s horse Conqueror, which won at Newmarket. A monstrous fine animal I assure you ! ”

“ You may laugh, but bring the idiot here

at your peril. The fit is on me, and I shall certainly do some deadly mischief. How can you be so stupidly patient."

"From the anticipation that I shall want allowances made for myself."

"A delicate rebuke! But here comes the daughter, and I shall be bored to death with her interesting invalid. *Malade imaginaire*, I suspect," and she walked towards the green-house.

"Mrs. Carleton is coming to shew the improvements," said the laughing Helen, as that lady turned the corner with Mesdames Daniell and Mahon.

"This is too bad!" as Lord Somebody said. "Is there no place of safety?"

"Yes! the stable set apart for my horse Conqueror; there Mrs. Carleton dares not put a foot."

"Helen, Helen, you are as bad as the rest; but save me from this infliction, and I will be civil to you for the next six months."

"Then, of course, you join Captains Ross or Franklyn, else you promise what you will not perform. But follow where I lead for once, and we will see what can be done for you;" and, leading her back to the house another way, she showed her into a small apartment adjoining the drawing-room.

"Really, Helen, you have proved yourself a

most charitable person; now, only keep the monsters away, and I will try to be civil after tea. Tell them I am mad, or dead, or any thing."

"No one could doubt the truth of the former."

"Caroline, my sweet love!" said her mother, "I cannot let you remain out any longer, you are so very delicate, and have coughed several times;" then, drawing her aside, she continued in a low tone, "I insist on your going in directly. The evening air will uncurl your hair, and make a fright of you; and, remember, you do not sing till the gentlemen come in."

"How do your grapes get on?" asked Mrs. Daniell; "mine have been beautiful."

"Oh, yes! I dare say," replied her hostess, pompously. "I believe Mr. Daniell attends to them himself; but Mr. Carleton has so much business, for he is applied to from all parts of the county, that he has not time for those trifling things, and I find so much to do about the grounds, I cannot be every where. The gardener was very ignorant and very idle. I said I was sure he would not do, but Mr. Carleton would take him. I saw the grapes would come to nothing, and have had fresh vines put in, and shall have the house heated

with hot water ; but the premises are so large. I have not had time. There is that chimney, it smoked most dreadfully, and Mr. Carleton only said, it did very well when the wind was not westerly ; but I said I did not see why it should smoke at all, so it is rebuilding on a plan of my own. The masons pretend not to understand it ; but I say that is nothing to me, I want only tools. Then there is that stable, one used occasionally, when the other fifteen stalls are full. The wall was four inches out of level, yet Mr. Carleton talked of its standing for years, and wanted me to wait ; but I said no, I cannot bear to see any thing wrong ; but it is just like him, always wants me to wait. Then there is that great arbatus ; I was obliged to move it when he was away, and change the shape of those beds. You see I have turned that path a little to the right. It is wonderful what a difference a few inches only will make with a little taste and trouble ; but some people never attempt to improve !”

“ I have such horror of a litter that I never pull down if I can avoid it,” replied Mrs. Daniell.

“ Perhaps not ; building is very expensive, and some people have no taste that way ;” with a draw-up meant to intimate a thorough con-

tempt for her guest's want of taste and inferior fortune.

"I could not live in such a constant bustle as you do; but I get on very well in my quiet way. Our grapes, though planted after yours, are very fine; and I will match the butter from our old dairy against any from your new one."

"No butter can be better than ours!" with a lofty air; "I will send you some to try, though I wonder any thing is well done with the servants one gets now-a-days. The housemaid you recommended was so impertinent, I was obliged to send her away at a moment's warning; she absolutely had the insolence to give me an answer! and I understand she has said since she would not live with me for thirty pounds a year, for she was never out of a bustle. A pretty pass servants are come to, indeed! want to sit in the drawing-room, with their hands before them, and do nothing. She wished for some chimney ornaments, and pictures or prints, for the housekeeper's room; for it looked so bare. She was ashamed some of her fashionable friends should come into it. I say we bring most of these things upon ourselves, by not keeping up our own dignity."

"But if they are insolent to you, we can have no hope," said the lisping Mrs. Mahon,

veiling the irony under the blandness of her tone.

“One cannot always be dignified,” replied the flattered, with a condescending smile; “one is obliged to relax sometimes. Would you believe it? a young woman would not engage with me yesterday, because the prospect from the windows was so very confined; and I hear she told the kitchenmaid she did not think the footman looked genteel.”

This was one of the very few subjects on which all the three ladies agreed, and each seemed eager to contribute her quota to the abuse of modern servants.

“You know how small our fairy cottage is,” said Mrs. Mahon, and I had a cook who told me, after I thought she was engaged, that she deeply regretted being under the painful necessity of disappointing me, but that she made a point of keeping up her music, and that she found there was not space in the housekeeper’s room for a piano; besides, she had been in the habit of playing in concert, and she understood none of the servants round were musical.”

“I hear,” said Mrs. Daniell, “that Mrs. Denman’s housemaid has just given her warning, alleging as a reason, that she finds no private dances are given among the servants in the neighbourhood, and that that is a thing to

which she has been accustomed, and cannot do without, and I hear also one of her footmen is going, because she talks of not visiting town this year; and he says if he should miss the season, he should lose footing, and be obliged to mix with the second class. It really is quite shocking! This comes of education!”

“Education!” resumed Mrs. Mahon, “one of my children brought me by mistake a piece of paper which turned out to be a love-letter from the kitchenmaid, and this was it:—

‘Dearest and best-loved John,

‘How shall I support your absence? Your memory is with me in every occupation. To me you are like the great lamp in the hall, making it all light round you. You say you love me in every dress; but oh! how I wish you had seen me on Sunday, in an *estasy gros de Naps*, and a pink sasnet hat. The men said I was beautiful, and fit to be a queen; but I thought only of you. Farmer Hopkins gives a dance on Monday. Do you think it will be genteel? and will you meet me there? I practises walsing when I can wash the dishes in time. Come when you can, and write always.

‘Yours till death,

‘LOUISA MATILDA BROMFIELD.’

This comes of so many schools; they did

well enough in former days, when they could neither read nor write."

"I quite agree with you," said Mrs. Carleton, "people talk to me about teaching the poor of Mansford, but I say no; if the girls are taught to work that is quite enough. What good will reading do them? They can go to church on the Sunday. One of my maids made her gown after Townshend, and I absolutely overheard Lady Catherine Alford's London abigail talking over one of Scott's novels, and saying she was quite in love with the hero; and my son John says farmer Hill's daughter reads Lord Byron.* Such things are really shocking!"

"Shocking, indeed!" responded her auditors.

"I understand Miss St. Maur is the great person for schools. I hear she intends to enable every one in her village to learn to read!"

"So my daughter Harriet says, and I shall speak to her on the subject."

"Miss St. Maur," began her hostess, pompously, after seating herself with queen-like dignity, "you are very young, and I wish to warn you against the dangers of education. The more ignorant the poor are kept, the better servants they make; more humble and more

* The authoress cannot claim the merit of invention for all these tales—most of them are facts.

obedient. In former days, the gentry were sure to meet with respect; now their inferiors are insolent enough to pretend to judge of the conduct of their superiors. These are fearful times, and we should all endeavour to keep down the rising spirit of rebellion;" and here she repeated some of the stories. "After hearing such things, I am sure a young woman of your sense must see the propriety of discouraging schools, and only teaching the girls to work."

Helen laughed at these "tales of the times," to the great scandal of the three non-education ladies; and then, aware, from experience, of the impossibility of changing their opinions, preferred treating the matter playfully, rather than offend them by a grave argument.

"You know, Mrs. Carleton, young people are apt to be headstrong, and attend only to the teacher Experience; so I believe you must let me run my own course, and only laugh at my folly, when I own educating the poor is one of my hobbies."

"You may treat the subject lightly, Miss St. Maur; though I thought you possessed of more wisdom than to despise the advice of those older than yourself, and who have enquired into these things; but I warn you, so much education will ruin the country and de-

stroy all subordination, for very soon none will choose to be servants."

" I am sorry such is your opinion ; but, as I consider the enabling every one to read his Bible the duty of a Christian, I should be to blame not to promote that object as much as is in my power. When all can read, there will be no superiority on that score, and some must work, as in the days of ignorance ; and, with all my admiration for antiquity and old customs, I neither wish nor can see how, in the present state of society, people can be estimated other than by character. No one worships the stars, though some do the sun. The rich man of former days, who ruled far and wide, has been replaced by many of moderate fortunes, and they must be content to have the respect divided in like proportion. With the present spirit of intelligence amongst the people, learn they would ; and surely it is wiser, if the flood will come, to seek to direct its course, that it may fertilise the land, than enter on the hopeless task of endeavouring to check its course. Ignorance, if such could now be, leaves the people at the mercy of every temptation and every demagogue. By promoting religious instruction, we do the duty of Christians, and must humbly leave the event

to a higher power. I have but one servant in my house who cannot read, and I doubt if there could be found any who do not feel a respectful attachment for me. I always take them from my own village, if I can, for the community of birthplace creates a sort of community of interest, and parents and children alike look upon me as a friend. I have known, amongst servants, such noble conduct and disinterested attachment, as might shame the selfishness of many nobly born. I see you think me a wild enthusiast," she added, smiling, "so I shall run off before you can proclaim your opinion, and ask after Catherine's head."

"A very self-willed young lady, and inclined to lecture her elders. I understand she gives herself great airs, and is resolved to make a grand match. I was afraid my son John would have had her at one time, but he thought better of it. Such a daughter-in-law would never suit me; but young people are not what they used to be. I suppose I must go and see how Lady Catherine Alford is; they say she gives herself airs; very likely to others, but of course to me the thing is out of the question; she knows I should not submit to it. I hear she was very impertinent to you the other day, Mrs. Daniell."

“ Not quite as much so as she was to you to-day,” replied that lady, coolly; and her hostess, without making any remark, sailed out of the room.

“ ‘ Miss St. Maur her daughter-in-law ! ’ ” said Mrs. Daniell, bursting into a loud laugh; “ and ‘ her son John thought better of it,’ when all the world knows he was refused twice, and never had any encouragement. Poor woman! no wonder the servants won’t stay with her; I have heard two or three declare they would rather break stones. Such a bustle!—she is never quiet—always wanting to improve, and makes things worse. Then she fancies all her works are superexcellent. Send me some butter, indeed! why, she scalds her cream, and never has a bit fit to eat. Lady Catherine impertinent to me, after her conduct to-day! That is a good one! Mrs. Carleton is, without exception, the most tiresome and disagreeable person I know.”

“ Oh! she has bored me to death,” said Mrs. Mahon. “ She can have no nerves. Such a dinner! I thought it meant for the farming men. Caroline, my dear,” addressing her daughter, who entered the room with Miss Carleton; “ come here, it looks interesting to sit at your mother’s feet.”

Helen was trying to persuade Catherine to be civil, when Mrs. Carleton's step was heard.

"Bolt the door, Helen, or I shall rave."

But the order was too late, and the hostess entered with increased grandeur, to awe the presumptuous Helen.

"I hope your Ladyship is better." Catherine had again sunk back with a sleepy air. "Miss St. Maur said you wished to be alone, or I should have come sooner."

"I am better, thank you," replied Catherine, languidly; "a little more quiet will restore me quite."

The hint was not taken, and a chair was drawn beside the sofa, whilst Catherine turned such a ludicrous glance of horror on Helen, that she was obliged to turn away.

"If I could tell what occasioned your headache, I have no doubt I could cure it."

"Open the door, Helen, the room is too warm!" cried Catherine, taking no notice of Mrs. Carleton.

Helen opened the door, and entered the drawing-room as some of the gentlemen made their appearance.

"Perhaps it was waiting so long for Mr. De Roos?" continued the questioner; still no reply. "Let me feel your pulse; I shall be

able to judge then. Some people talk of the smell of the dinner; but I never believe any thing of the sort; and as for *eau de Cologne* curing it, that is quite nonsense. I remember, when Lady Mary Santon was here, she had just such a head-ache, and some recommended one thing, and some another; but I said put your hands in warm water; she did so, and was cured directly."

"Prodigious!" exclaimed Lady Catherine, out-doing the Dominie himself, as she started from her seat, and approached the drawing-room.

But she was not to escape so easily. Mr. De Roos and Mr. John Carleton were standing in the doorway, and her ear caught the words "my horse Conqueror," whilst the violent rustling of a silk gown behind, gave warning of the approach of her pompous tormentor. The danger of retreat or advance seemed almost equal. She attempted to brush past Mr. John Carleton, whose back was towards her, but a part of her dress caught in the door, and detained her. Almost before she was aware of the accident, Mr. De Roos had stepped forward, disengaged her, and whispered in a low but gay voice, "Fear not! I will cover your retreat, and prevent pursuit."

For an instant she looked surprised and half offended at his perfect ease and confidence;

then yielding to his elegance, prepossessing countenance, arch gaiety, and quick perception, she repeated, in a more playful tone, "Prodigious!" and, bowing her thanks, took advantage of his politeness to join the young ladies at the piano.

Carelessly linking his arm within that of the heir of Mansford, he drew him towards his mother, whose progress he dexterously stopped by a few magic words.

"I hear such wonders of your improvements, Mrs. Carleton, that if Colville Lodge were my own, I must intreat you to superintend some alterations. I understand a person who had known Mansford in former days, could hardly recognise it now."

The cloud passed from the lady's brow, and she was all condescension. After listening to her for some time with the most flattering attention, the gentleman left her, having won favour from mother and son.

"Mr. Carleton," he said, "will you permit me to accompany you to the next justice meeting? I may not again have such an opportunity of learning the duties of a magistrate. You know a seat on the bench does not always confer wisdom."

"No, indeed!" replied his gratified host, "as I find to my cost, when all my schemes

are thwarted by ignorant coadjutors. I shall be delighted to take you, and will give you a few hints, which will enable you to understand the business," and he proceeded to favour his guest with something much more diffusive than hints.

With some difficulty, but great politeness, he at length extricated himself from the never-wearying talker, and bent for a moment over the still-reclining Mrs. Mahon."

"Do you still retain your kind interest in my wounded arm? It is only a scratch, but I have an aversion to surgeons, and feel all the delight of woman's sympathy, and the magic power of woman's nursing."

"I cannot tell you how you delight me: come early to-morrow; I pique myself on being sincere, and never saying any thing I do not mean."

"I shall not fail; but you will keep my secret, for I have a thorough English horror of becoming an object of attention."

The lady smiled her sweetest smile, and placed her finger on her lip, whilst the gentleman turned to Mr. Daniell.

"I have been thinking over what you said about the legality of that ejection; but I doubt if I quite understood your last argument."

Mr. Daniell repeated it, with explanations and amplifications.

Mr. De Roos was silent for a moment, and looked in deep thought, then said abruptly, in the manner of one suddenly convinced, "I understand now! This comes of having things clearly explained. I see I must yield some of the headstrong judgments of youth to the wisdom of others;" and he turned to Lord Marston, who had just joined them.

"What do you think, my lord, of the coalition talked of between the R. and the M. parties? I know such things are often nothing but reports of the ignorant; but I am so well aware of your lordship's quick perception of character and intimate acquaintance with all the political combinations of the day, that your opinion would be decisive."

"There are some things which should not be spoken of lightly, even to the most discreet, particularly by those who may be supposed to understand a little about these matters; but with the slight knowledge I possess, I should suppose and imagine—nay, I should think, there was every probability of such a thing being possible."

"I understand you my lord, and of course doubt no longer;" whilst his lordship looked half terrified at having been flattered into any

thing so decisive; but it was too late to retract.

“Mrs. Daniell, I hear your abode is the very home of comfort; no ungravelled walks; no bustle; no litter; flowers allowed time to grow, and guests to be quiet. I must persuade you to pity my forlorn condition, and help me to arrange my household at Colville. Mr. Mahon, you will remember your kind promise about the coachmaker?” and before he could receive an answer he had joined the group at the piano.

“I am sure you sing, Mr. De Roos!” exclaimed Miss Carleton.

Mr. De Roos did sing—sing well too—and without any of the farce of denial, or the trouble of pressing. He sang an Italian duet with Miss Carleton; and then, at her command, an Irish melody. It was impossible not to be pleased with his singing, and more than a silent admiration was bestowed on his performance. Even Lady Catherine showed him favour, allowed him to join Helen and herself in the Gipsies’ Chorus, and afterwards sang a duet with him, as the reward he playfully claimed for having been her protector. Helen alone said nothing in praise of his voice; but, passionately fond as she was of music, her silence said more than the words of others. She had

for some time stood rather apart from the rest, and Mr. De Roos had the vanity or the penetration to fancy he had obtained a great share of her observation. Totally free from all wish for display, and perfectly aware that neither Catherine or Miss Carlton would regret her refusal, she had declined singing unless absolutely wanted; yet was her voice superior to any there, and the stranger doubted it not, from the part she had taken in the trio.

There were, who thought Lady Catherine had been taught too much; whilst Miss Carleton was not always particular as to time or tune; and Miss Mahon wanted power, though she was a sweet and pleasing singer. Song succeeded song, generally duets, in which the stranger bore a part, and still Helen sat with her face half hid, revelling in the luxury of sweet sounds.

“Will not Miss St. Maur sing?” at length asked Mr. De Roos, in a rather earnest, but most respectful tone.

“Not to-night,” she said, looking up with a smile, though the tears still glistened in her eyes, for he had just been singing that most affecting of all affecting things, the “Captive Knight;” and so feelingly had he sung it, that she had felt all the blighted hope, the desolation and despair of the poor prisoner; and had

none else been nigh, would have sobbed outright.

"Oh! but you must," said Alford, who always interfered if he thought her slighted; "we must have a duet. No one ever admires my voice but when I sing with you."

To oppose him, without some good reason, she knew of old to be hopeless, and rose to comply.

"Do pray sing that funny thing about teaching a foreigner to read—it just suits your voice," said Miss Carleton, placing the song before her. "Poor thing! she has had the best masters, but her voice is nothing in Italian music."

Helen heard the whispered remark, and an arch smile, as she looked up and met Mr. De Roos's glance, showed that she did so. He would have proposed some other song, but before he could speak she had begun, and none could fail to admire the playfulness and point with which it was sung. She would have risen at its conclusion, but Alford insisted on her singing "The harp that once through Tara's halls."

"There are some things one dares not praise!" said Mr. De Roos, in a low voice, as he stepped aside to allow her to pass.

Helen took no notice, but immediately asked

Miss Carleton for a song admirably calculated to show off her voice to the best advantage. Whilst the song was singing, Mr. De Roos conversed with Alford. "I cannot tell you how I regret not having known your family before; for in my childish days, ere I lost a beloved mother, I used often to hear Lady Marston quoted as all that woman should be, and it has long been my wish to be thought worthy of her son's friendship. Moralists say no sentiment in the human heart is quite pure, and to-night I have learnt to envy you your influence over Miss St. Maur, who appears to be one of those beings one pictures to oneself in boyhood, and wastes manhood in seeking in vain. I dare scarcely, on the introduction of a Mrs. Carleton, presume to consider myself as even a common acquaintance."

"You do but justice to my mother and Helen," replied the warm-hearted Alford, completely won by this praise of the two persons he loved most on earth. "I must introduce you to both. Helen, Mr. De Roos is so fearful that the introduction of the pompous Mrs. Carleton might make him odious in your sight, that I have consented to play Mr. C., and make him known to you as an admirer of excellence."

Helen blushed slightly as she returned the

respectful bow of the introduced ; a blush of which Mr. De Roos formed his own opinion.

“ Being a stranger, Miss St. Maur, I took the liberty of riding through a part of Hurlestone a day or two since, and now tell of my presumption, lest you should hear of it from less friendly lips. I was assured, by more than one, that its mistress was too liberal to bar its beauties from a stranger ; and as I rode through your superb woods, I could not but call to mind the heroes the noble race of St. Maur had produced. As I passed through the village, with its neat school and comfortable cottages, and listened to the prayers and blessings that hallowed your name, I understood all the luxury of doing good, and why you mingle not with the great world. Surely one may be forgiven envying you ! ”

Helen absolutely started. She had watched him adapt himself to the foibles of others ; but, with the weakness of human nature, she thought not her own would be propitiated, and that so boldly. She turned on him a penetrating look, yet nothing was to be seen but the open expression of warm, yet respectful admiration. She paused for a moment, and then her part was taken.

“ You are a fearful personage, Mr. De Roos. There is no weakness, no secret, but you can

lay it bare at a touch." She fancied there was a slight, a very slight change of countenance, but the next instant thought herself mistaken, and continued: "It would be wiser in all who wish hidden things to be unrevealed, to keep beyond the power of your spells; and yet, I suppose, I must yield to the charm to which others have yielded, and as a reward for reading me this lesson on the heart's hidden vanity, or for your admiration of my ancestors and flattery of myself, invite you to Hurlestone on Thursday next."

Miss Carleton called him away at the moment, and he could only bow his thanks and look his pleasure."

"Oh! Miss St. Maur," said Mr. Carleton, "I am come to you for a little quiet. What it is to be a talker? I am tired to death. Let Mr. Daniell once begin, and there is no hope of a conclusion, or putting in a word. His school-fellows gave him the name of 'Jaw-me-dead;' but one would have thought as he advanced in years he would have seen the propriety of being more silent; but some people are quite blind to their own faults!" And on moralized Mr. Carleton for full five minutes, without a stop, on the impropriety committed by his brother magistrate in talking so much, till fortunately, as Helen thought, a summons from his wife

released her from the torrent of words. There is a common saying, "Out of the frying-pan into the fire;" and our heroine was doomed to exemplify its truth, for before she could rise Mr. Daniell had taken the vacant seat beside her. "I congratulate you on the summons that called Mr. Carleton away, and saved you from a deluge of speech. A full spring-tide is nothing to the overwhelming force of his words. A French school-fellow gave him the *soubriquet* of '*Parle ton.*' It really is quite melancholy to see a man of his age and sense, so blind to his foible! I cannot understand how a person can talk so incessantly without being weary." And on moralized Mr. Daniell, as Mr. Carleton had done before.

"What makes you look so grave, *ma belle*?" said Alford, approaching her soon after.

"I am moralizing, as two have done before me, on what a strange being man is; a mole to his own foibles, a hawk to the foibles of others."

"A truce to moralizing," said Catherine, "and tell us what you think of this *malade intéressant*."

"*Malade imaginaire*, you mean," replied Helen archly. "I think he deals in magic, and that we owe him much for having thrown his glamour over you, and caused you to be civil for one hour out of the five you have spent

at Mansford. To secure the performance of your six month's civility, I have engaged him to meet you on Thursday."

"Indeed! you amaze me. I should not have suspected you of such an unadvised act, after so short an acquaintance; but of course it was solely on my account."

"Of course."

"What do you think of this stranger, Alford?" asked Helen, as his sister left them.

"I think him still a little bit of a coxcomb, but very pleasant and elegant."

"A coxcomb! a magician rather! A very awful personage!

'An awful man John Todd! John Todd!

An awful man was he!'

You may laugh now, but you may feel the truth hereafter."

"Why, he scarcely said anything till he entered the drawing-room; so taken up was he with his own elegant figure and wounded arm."

"He has said enough since, and, if lips were silent, I am much mistaken if eyes and ears were not the more active. He has every sense double; can see, without looking; hear, without listening; speak, without being heard; and shows us our foibles as the means through which he wins us. We may deceive ourselves; but we shall scarcely deceive him."

“Hey-day, Helen! whence all this eloquence and penetration? and why seek the acquaintance of such a dangerous person?”

“His character interests me as uncommon, and with the daring of youth, I despise the danger.”

“His character interests you! Ha! ha! ha! So it does Miss Carleton.”

“*Plus on est fou, plus on rit.*”

“Thanks! Develop his character as you please, you will find him neither more nor less than an agreeable coxcomb.”

“Out upon you for a poor blind mole! But remember you must behave with due decorum on Thursday. I cannot have my guests put to confusion for your misdeeds.”

“Cruel creature! I have promised my shy neighbour one day of fishing, and one of shooting; have condoled with Mrs. Mahon, and intend to give Mrs. Carleton—no, I will give her nothing, for she does not deserve it.”

CHAPTER IV.

Après l'esprit de discernement, ce qu'il-y-a au monde de plus rare, sont les diamans et les perles.

Il-y-a de petites règles, des devoirs, des bienséances attachées aux tems, aux personnes, qui ne se devinent point à force d'esprit, et que l'usage apprend sans nulle peine; juger des hommes par les fautes qui leur échappent en ce genre, avant qu'ils soient assez assez, c'est en juger par leurs règles, ou par la pointe de leurs cheveux, c'est vouloir un jour être detrompé.

LA BRUYERE.

"Do not stay here with me, my sweet love," said Mrs. Mahon to her daughter, "but go and entertain Miss St. Maur, who is looking for you."

"I suspect she is much more agreeably employed, and I have no wish to play Madame de Trop," replied Caroline in a whisper, looking to where Helen and Mr. De Roos were standing apart, engaged in an earnest and animated conversation.

"Nonsense! he has not known her more than three weeks, and I see nothing particular in his attentions."

“ True ! but some secret sympathy, or something less romantic, has taught him to cross her path almost every day during that period ; and there is too much congeniality between them, to allow them to meet so often with indifference.”

“ Folly ! Join the party directly, or I shall ;” then turning to a sheepish-looking young man of good fortune, who approached at the instant, she resumed in a moment her caressing tone. “ My dear Caroline is such an affectionate child, I cannot persuade her to quit my side. I don’t know how I shall ever part with her ; and yet, with her sweet disposition and talents, I can scarcely hope to keep her always with me. But there are so few worthy of her, I don’t mean as to fortune, for I think less of that than most mothers—but as to better things. How I wish more of our young men resembled you !”

The sheepish-looking young man looked more sheepish still, and the mother congratulated herself, and not without reason, on having almost secured a *dernier resort*.

Meanwhile the daughter, with a lagging step, and a blush for her mother, proceeded to disturb the *tête-à-tête*. On the day, before Mrs. Mahon had given her first dinner to the heiress, and had, as was her wont, furnished house-room for some of the likely young men, rightly

judging that the sociable morning's meal brought more of intimacy, and perhaps a warmer feeling, than the crowded and sometimes formal dinner. The road from Hurlestone to Bensted being dangerous at night, from a bank having given way, she had been obliged to include Helen among the "Seven Sleepers."

The windows had been thrown open on account of the heat, and after breakfast, the party had dispersed in groups on the lawn, or in the drawing-room, as fancy directed. As Miss Mahon approached, she found that however earnest might have appeared the conversation between our heroine and Mr. De Roos, it was on no weightier subject than some of the popular works of the day, and the ready manner in which Helen appealed to her as she came up, showed that one at least felt no vexation at her presence. The conversation was continued; and, by degrees, nearly the whole party collected on the same spot.

"Who is that coming down the hill?" asked one.

"The postman!" replied another.

"The postman! the postman!" and all moved towards the gate, though none perhaps anticipated letters of any importance.

I know not what others may do, but I love a letter above most things. A delightful long

letter! the three pages, the ends, and round the seal written and re-written; the words formed by a flowing pen, and the sense dictated by a loving and eloquent heart; in short, such a letter as ladies love and gentlemen ridicule; and for such letters I have watched and listened as eagerly, and as breathlessly, as can the sick for the step of the coming leech. Thus am I waiting and listening even now, and yet to me will come nothing that can bring hope or pleasure. Perhaps it was the same feeling of vague expectation, which induced all to move in the same direction. The man was employed by several families, and thus Helen was almost the only one who could receive no letter, yet she joined the group round the gate; and, in answer to some remark from Mr. De Roos, hoped he would hear his father was better.

“I thank you!” he replied, much gratified by the kind tone in which the wish had been conveyed. “If not, I shall goto him immediately; you know what it is to lose a parent, and I have but one left.”

He turned aside as he spoke, the tears came into Helen’s eyes, and a fresh subject for sympathy seemed awakened.

The bags were delivered, the letters taken out, and there was one for Mr. De Roos from his father. Helen’s eyes were almost uncon-

sciously fixed on his face, as he tore it open, and glanced at its contents. The first few lines seem to give him pleasure, then a change came over his features, and the letter was slightly crushed with a sudden and impatient movement. Helen failed not to remark the change, but without a clue to guide her to the contents of that letter, her curiosity, though strongly awakened, must remain unsatisfied. That they were not pleasurable was certain. At that instant he looked up, their eyes met, and aware he had been observed, he coloured slightly and half turned away.

“I hope your father is better.”

“Thank you! yes—no—yes,” stammered out the gentleman, for the first time since she had known him confused and almost awkward. This confusion lasted but for a moment, her look of wonder recalled his scattered senses, his self-possession returned, and he was again the bland, the collected, and the winning.

“I am happy to say my father is much better; but I was so absorbed in my letter, I believe I should apologize for my distant mode of answering.”

“I too should apologize for having disturbed you, but I feared your father was worse.”

She was bending over a flower bed, either admiring its beauties, or trying to account for

the change of manner in Mr. De Roos, for she did not like to feel herself baffled, when the subject of her thoughts gained her side.

“What a beautiful gum cistus!” he said, pointing to one just coming into bloom, “and what a lovely flower it is, so delicate, so fragile. It is like one of the bright dreams of our youth, fading almost before we feel its beauty; its most appropriate epitaph a sigh. Or like the hope of the morning, gone ere the evening hour.”

She looked up in surprise, but the pensive smile, and the half-veiled eye, accorded well with the melancholy sentiment.

“Have you penetrated my taste for the romantic, and thus covertly ridicule it; or can it be, that the gay, the envied, the animated, ‘the favourite of fortune,’ as he is styled by some, bears a canker in his heart, blighting the fairest flowers of life?”

“There are few roses without thorns, and where is the heart that hides not some sorrow in its secret depths.”

There was a something very touching in his tone, and flattering in this confidence. Helen felt it, but answered gaily:

“The roses with thorns are most beautiful of their species; and for the secret depths of the human heart, I trust yours are not so profound as to be beyond the leech’s fathom line

to reach, or its sorrows beyond his skill to cure."

"I suppose I must own," he replied smiling, "that I spoke at the moment more as a poet than as one who confines himself to strict matter of fact, and were I to tell the cause of my present discomfiture, I fear I should meet with but little sympathy."

"Pray do not keep me in suspense, for I am what you gentlemen would call a thorough woman, all sympathy and curiosity; and 'since trifles make the sum of human life,' why may I not condole with you on the death of a favourite hunter, or the bursting of a famous gun—two of the heaviest misfortunes, as I have been told, which can befall a man between the ages of eighteen and forty-five."

"You are laughing at me, Miss St. Maur, and I cannot bear your ridicule."

"Nay, I am gravity itself; and it is quite impossible that the Hon. Mr. De Roos should shrink from ridicule!"

"Not quite as impossible as you imagine, and though others might deem the cause of my discomfiture one of those trifles that make the sum of human life, it is no trifle to me, since it will deprive me of the pleasure of dining with you to-morrow."

"Indeed!" she replied, blushing against

her inclination at the regret implied and looked.

“ Well, I shall not distress your modesty by saying how much my guests and myself shall lament your absence, but rather try to overcome the obstacle. You are so perfect in the art of putting all in good-humour, that you are an invaluable acquisition, though I doubt if your talents would be rewarded with the like success, were you to attempt to amend our morals instead of our manners.”

“ Surely you do not deem me a flatterer, who would outrage truth for the paltry purpose of winning common applause.”

“ No; only as one who would avail himself of the foibles of mankind for amusement or profit.”

“ Your manner is playful, but your words, if in earnest, are keen; I had hoped you at least understood me.”

“ Did you hope so?” replied Helen quickly, with one of those sudden impulses that people of lightning perceptions cannot always control, and her eyes were again fixed on his face. Once more she thought she perceived confusion as he turned away, but it might be only surprise at her abruptness, or wounded feeling at the doubt it implied. There was a silence, and when he again spoke, it was in sadness.

“ Said I not truly, the hope of the morning fled ere the evening hour? Some few minutes since, and I flattered myself with the idea of possessing a portion of the esteem of Miss St. Maur, and now I feel she considers me as a heartless deceiver. I cannot stoop to defend myself even if defence would avail me, and can but hope time will prove me what I wish Miss St. Maur to think me.”

The melancholy tone, so full of respect, even at the time it showed how much he was hurt, touched her, and she hastened, with all her natural frankness and kindness, to heal the wound she had unintentionally inflicted.

“ An heiress is too petted a creature often to hear the truth, and I fear my friends have indulged my playful mood, till it sometimes caracoles without due control, and wounds in sport, without the slightest intention of so doing. I assure you, I have not yet decided you to be any thing so horrible as a heartless deceiver; on the contrary, I feel I have not yet fathomed those secret depths of which you spoke, and will willingly believe in the value of their hidden pearls. If my words conveyed a doubt of your sincerity, it must have been from a recollection of one of the lessons of my childhood, to distrust all that looked most pleasurable. And now, can you forgive me? or will

you leave me to entertain my guests as I best can?"

St. Sesanus himself would have been subdued; whilst, even in her gayest moods, there was a *retenue* in her manner, that effectually repressed every approach to freedom.

"It is I should ask forgiveness, since I fear I was pettishly offended for nothing." He took her hand as he spoke, but allowed her to withdraw it instantly. "There are few who might not dread your penetration, yet must I challenge it. Rather would I forfeit your esteem for ever, than win it by appearing other than I am."

"You have at least won my thanks at present, and of course, since you challenge my penetration, you can have no cause to dread it. I fear you will find my party tiresome."

"You forget the obstacle still exists?"

"I thought we had decided on overcoming it. What is it?"

"The presence of one whom I am little inclined to introduce at Hurlestone, as his manners and appearance would subject him to ridicule; and, do not blame my weakness too harshly, if I own I could ill brook, as his companion, becoming the object of merriment to you."

"I certainly cannot comprehend such a feeling in Mr. De Roos, but we must not discuss

character again. Tell me all about this *outré* being, and if you would not scruple to introduce him to a sister, bring him to Hurleston. Under our patronage any thing short of an ourang-outang will be treated with all due distinction."

"A thousand thanks for thus kindly undertaking the office of showman," whilst his looks conveyed, as he intended, warmer thanks than his laughing speech. "This horrific personage was left to my father's care by my late uncle, and we have been exerting our influence to procure him a cadetship, but hitherto in vain. The young man knows nothing of his birth, and my uncle never mentioned him till on his death-bed: too late to learn particulars. He was brought up by some obscure person in the north, and has come to town to try what he can get, I believe. My father's health being delicate, he has sent him down to me to keep him out of mischief, and he is to arrive to-day."

"Then you have not seen him, and do not know he is so very *outré*."

"My father gives a strange account of his *gaucheries*, and since it is but fair you should know all, hints at some brawl in a gaming-house. I have but little inclination to become the keeper of this 'northern bear.'"

"It is not the station your friends would

assign you, certainly ; but is he too old to learn, and what is his name ?”

“ His name is Elliot ; but I suspect, though not more than three-and-twenty, he is too self-willed to allow a hope of amendment.”

“ This is nothing very promising, but as you have not seen him, he may turn out better than you expect, and we may make some allowances.”

“ But unfortunately I have seen him. We met as I was wandering in the north, and I had more to endure from his insolence than I could well brook, though, as an inferior and one to be pitied, I curbed my temper. Indeed, once he nearly lost me my life, by pushing me into the water ; but I wish none of this to be remembered against him, and know you will not repeat it. We were but young then, and, as you so kindly say, some allowances should be made. He was then a long lank awkward youth, with broad accent, and my present account is scarcely more favourable ; so I fear you will withdraw your kind invitation.”

“ No ; for the sake of his delicate situation and renowned border name, to say nothing of our pleasure in your society, he shall receive an invitation to-morrow. If we keep his secret and pay him attention, others will follow our example, and Miss Jones will take him for a resuscitated border chief.”

“How shall I thank you?”

“By keeping my company in good humour.”

Most men would have been flattered by Helen's conduct, but Mr. De Roos, it is thought, did not review it with any great satisfaction.

The morrow came, and the guests began to arrive. There were the Mahons, and the Carletons, and the Daniells, and the Joneses, and some others not worth the trouble of introducing to our readers. It was what Alford called one of her civil dinners, when she entertained folly and stupidity by wholesale; yet had he kindly offered to play the host, an offer gladly accepted.

Though she neither paid compliments or made pretty speeches, she was polite and attentive to all; and if some of her neighbours complained that they could not get intimate with her, none had any cause to blame her for slight or rudeness. Without flattering a foible, or encouraging a fault, she always conversed on a subject agreeable to her visitors, and even Mrs. Carleton found no great cause for complaint. Though penetrating, she was not sarcastic; and ever preferred eulogy to censure. As a hostess she was inimitable, and that awful thing, a formal circle with ladies on one side and gentlemen on the other, was never seen at Hurleston; and a yawn, except among the ultra

stupid, was almost as rare. Her's was a kindness of heart, not mere politeness of manner; for to the keen perceptions of a Chesterfield, she united the love, the sincerity, and the benevolence of a Christian. Such characters can alone be truly polite.

By some strange chance Mr. De Roos was again the last of the guests, and again the smoking horses seemed to intimate the delay was occasioned by no wish of that gentleman.

"Again the last! that his entrance may make a sensation," said Alford, in a low voice. "What say you of your hero now? A coxcomb, or not a coxcomb? that is the question."

"Most decidedly not, though by no means ignorant of the inimitable grace with which he enters a room. But pray don't call him my hero; and remember your promise to be civil to his companion."

"Never fear! you shall see how good I can be; though it is rather cruel not to let me laugh a little. But your conduct to this newly-risen star, as Miss Jones calls him, is beyond my comprehension; you think too much of him."

"And you too little. To play oracle, he is much better or much worse than you deem him."

"You certainly write in Moore's Almanack

—‘rain about this time, the day before or the day after.’ You are blinded by his manners; there is nothing out of the common in his mind.”

“*Nous verrons.* Here they come.”

Those who were at the window might have remarked that Mr. De Roos was looking from the carriage with the eagerness and animation of anticipated pleasure, perhaps triumph, and the elegant and assured air of one accustomed to win favour; whilst his companion was leaning back, like one who would fain shun observation.”

Few things could have furnished a greater contrast than the two persons who entered the room together. Mr. De Roos has been already described; with his slight and elegant figure, scarcely above the middle size, pleasing and handsome features, and fascinating manners, he seemed the very epitome of grace. As he paid his compliments to Helen, with the most animated looks, he glanced slightly at his companion before he introduced him, as if to remind her of her promise, whilst a smile seemed to intimate that that promise had furnished one link of the chain which he sought to cast around her. Even Helen half started as the introduction took place, and Miss Carleton laughed aloud.

The stranger was about six feet three, thin, and ungainly to a high degree; a little lame, with a sickly complexion; a large black patch over one temple, and ill-arranged shaggy black hair, which reached almost to his eyebrows, and gave him a sinister look. Without being absolutely ill-dressed, his clothes wanted an air, and any slight awkwardness of manner that might have passed unnoticed in another, was rendered doubly conspicuous by his ungainly figure. As Helen looked on her two visitors, she forgave the smile of self-gratulation she perceived, or fancied she perceived, on the lip of one. Not that the stranger looked sheepish or shy: on the contrary, his manner was rather stern and proud. There was no stooping, no shuffling, no shrinking, but his figure was drawn up to its greatest height, and all thought the Irish giant must vail to him in stature; whilst his step, as far as his lameness would permit, was a strong and manly stride, rather than the delicate tread fit for a lady's drawing-room.

As Miss Carleton's laugh and expression of disgust met his ear, and as Mr. De Roos introduced him in a tone, just so little patronising as to be marked only by a sensitive ear, his step became still more proud, his look still more stern; but as he met Helen's kindly smile, which showed sympathy, not patronage—for she too had heard the laugh—his sternness

and his pride half passed away; and as he listened to her soft voice giving him welcome, and gazed on the brightness of her beauty, the feeling with which he had entered the room seemed completely changed, and he looked awkward and confused. The change was not unobserved by Helen, who felt it as the greatest involuntary flattery she had ever received; and we will not say, this conviction—for who has no vanity to propitiate?—might not have had some influence on her future conduct.

After expressing her pleasure at his presence, in terms which, as they were dictated by feeling, were neither too high nor too low, she conversed with him for a few moments on subjects which scarcely required more than acquiescence; and then perceiving that the eyes of all were on them, she asked if he were fond of flowers; owned the conservatory was one of her passions; then calling on Alford to assist her in doing its honours, introduced him at the same time as one who, known from childhood, had kindly offered to play the host. As they passed through the drawing-room, and she stopped to converse for a moment with some of the different groups, she made a point of introducing Mr. Elliott, and her marked attention won him civility from all. Before the drawing-room was deserted, the uncouth-looking stranger had shared in an

animated conversation with Helen and Alford, and though his appearance made it almost a mockery to talk of elegance, and a tincture of reserve rendered him the antipodes of his fair companion in manner, still nothing about him indicated a mean or grovelling mind. Though etiquette forbade his sitting next Helen, she showed him much attention, and had procured him Miss Mahon as a neighbour; so not relapsing, save once, into his first stern mood, some of the ladies pronounced him to be a very ill-looking, stupidly polite sort of personage, but Miss Carleton still openly avowed her detestation and horror, "wondering how Mr. De Roos could take such an ugly bear about with him."

"Did you favour Mr. De Roos with your opinion of his friend?" inquired our heroine.

"To be sure. But pray do not call him his friend!"

"What did he say? And why may I not call him his friend?"

"He said I was very severe, and ought to pity him, as you did, for he was a dependant on Lord Fitzallan; and I am sure he is no friend of his. So I shall laugh at him as much as I please."

"I thought as much!" was Helen's sudden exclamation. She then mildly stated to the young lady the want of feeling her conduct

indicated ; and finding the remonstrance of no avail, declared plainly that no guest should be insulted a second time by the same person in her house.

Miss Carleton pouted and flounced ; but the heiress of Hurlestone was not a person to be quarrelled with, so she indemnified herself with the determination of annoying him trebly in every other house in which she might chance to meet him.

Leaving Mrs. Hargrave to entertain the elders, Helen joined the young ladies in a stroll. Their white dresses, floating amongst the trees, were visible from the dining-room, and Alford, who ever acted as a privileged person, sprang out of the window, followed by Messieurs De Roos and Elliott, and joined the walking party.

“ Of course we are very glad to see you,” said the laughing Helen ; “ but what will become of my guests, since the deputy host has deserted.”

“ Oh, the deputy’s deputy will do very well. I have appointed Carleton president, and Mahon croupier, and we left them discussing warrants and mittimusses, black cattle and American blight.”

Miss Carleton soon turned into a narrow path, only wide enough for two, and then remarking three diverging from the same spot, all terminating in a grotto, insisted on betting

with Alford as to which was the longest, to be decided by their party dividing into three portions, each taking a different path; then, having arranged every thing to her own satisfaction, without a thought as to the dissatisfaction of others, she put her arm within that of Mr. De Roos, and thus compelled him to accompany her, calling on Alford at the same time to take another path. After a laugh at the manœuvre, he prevailed on Miss Jones to accept his escort, and left Helen, Miss Mahon, and Mr. Elliott together.

That gentleman seemed quite another person when left with those two fair and kindly beings. In a short time his reserve had vanished. The face, lit up as some few faces, and only some few, can; and as he talked of the old border tales, and the beauties of his native country, or gazed on the lovely scenery around, and listened to the noble deeds of Helen's ancestors, which Miss Mahon found pleasure in relating, the occasional flashing of his dark eye was as the lightning through the midnight gloom. Once, when the flashing had passed, a sigh succeeded, and a deeper gloom came over his brow. His eyes sought the ground, then on a sudden he looked up and said, in a melancholy tone—

“You are happy, Miss St. Maur, for you have the memory of the past to live upon. You may dwell on the noble deeds of your fathers,

and feel they need not blush for their descendant. But for me! I have no past; and the present and the future, what will they be? If I win a name, none will smile—if I win a grave, none will weep.”

Helen was surprised; and the tears stood in her dark eyes as she heard his melancholy words and met his melancholy look.

“Say not so,” she said, smiling on him through her tears. “I will predict a brighter fate: A name ennobled by high virtues, if not by gallant deeds, with kind and loving friends.”

“Do you predict this?” and the flush of excited hope for a moment glowed on his manly cheek, and then faded away as suddenly as it had come. “No, lady, no! The poor, and the nameless, and the friendless, must only hope an honourable death, and even that they may not win.”

“Doubt not my powers of prophecy. Few can be heroes in these dull times; but the noble mind, if its trust be placed aright, shall master an untoward fate.”

We have already owned she was an enthusiast, and even the most dull could not have looked on her at that moment, without being inspired by her own bright hopes.

But Mr. Elliott was not dull, and no weak despondent, though the evil fortunes of his youth, his isolated state, and a severe illness,

had somewhat lowered his naturally buoyant spirit. He too was an enthusiast. What wonder, then, if his youthful hopes won brightness from her inspiration; or that he should reply with flashing eye and glowing cheek?

"I will believe you, lady, and if the hope prove vain, it shall perish only in the grave; your words, your kindness, shall lighten the gloom of an adverse fate. Think me not a weak and indolent complainer, though a fancied resemblance to the home of my childhood roused for a time the passion of feeling. I will bear my own sorrows as I must, and clear my own path. A month's residence in the great world has shown me that to ask for pity is to meet contempt; but, since you have predicted a brighter lot, I will not prove unworthy of your interest."

Miss Mahon, who had lingered behind to gather a flower, rejoined them at the moment, and as both felt too much to wish to say more, the conversation dropped, and Mr. Elliott turned into another path.

"I have persuaded *la belle Susanne*," said Alford, coming up to Helen, "that your northern bear is descended from the ancient kings of Northumberland, who crossed the borders one day by mistake,—and related to all the renowned reivers of that name; so ex-

pect an exquisite scene the first moment she can get up a sentimental conversation."

"Oh, Alford! how can you be so thoughtless?" replied Helen, convinced that a discussion on the stranger's pedigree would be any thing rather than pleasing; but Alford had left her, without giving her time to reprove, and before she could follow to have the mischief repaired, Mr. De Roos had joined her.

"I have been long seeking to thank you for your kindness, in patronizing my awkward visitor. I am ashamed to say with what horror I shrank from introducing him to you, or how much I was provoked when his delay obliged us to enter a crowded room. For some freak or other, even at the last moment, he doubted about coming, and said something about being thought a fortune-hunter. Poor young man! it is really a sad thing to see how blind he is to his own deficiencies. When I saw your look as you first beheld him, I felt ashamed of my selfishness in having brought him, and then the dignity and kindness with which you received him, checking the impertinence of others, showed me my own littleness in shrinking from the association. I do not know whether to feel most humbled or gratified at your angelic conduct."

"It is not for me to determine on which side

the balance should descend," replied Helen with a penetrating look, for she had formed her own estimate of the matter.

" I see you highly disapprove of my weakness in fearing ridicule."

" On the contrary, I should not have been aware of the weakness had you not disclosed it; and, entertaining it, I am sorry to inform you that Mr. Elliott's dependant situation is known to more than one mean mind among my guests. Had he been known only as your visitor, he would have been sufficiently courted."

The gentleman looked much annoyed, but what he said, after a moment's consideration, might account for this.

" I am indeed vexed to hear this ; the more so, as I fear it has been occasioned by my own inadvertence, and want of self-possession. Miss Carleton asked so many teasing questions, that, unpractised in every species of deception, I found I had unconsciously admitted more than I had intended; and, then entangled by my own frankness, as a last resource, I endeavoured to engage her pity and silence, and foolishly flattered myself I had succeeded. I see you are surprised at my deficiency in parrying troublesome questions; but I fear I shall never make a courtier."

" Surprise is not the word ; I am absolutely

amazed to find Miss Carleton had the power of baffling you."

"I am afraid you give me credit for powers of dissimulation which I do not possess?"

"Do I?" she said, half carelessly half pointedly, and turned away, leaving the gentleman to answer Mr. Mahon, who spoke to him at the instant with smiles and courtesy.

As Helen entered the drawing-room, she heard the soft tones of the sentimental Miss Jones addressing Mr. Elliott in words which proved that Alford's account had not been exaggerated.

"How delightful it must be to be descended from the ancient monarchs of the north, and to live on the ecstatic reminiscences of the noble and the brave! How I envy you the rapturous privilege! Have you no chronicle of the deeds of your house, full of chivalric and romantic border tales? I dote on such things; they fling the stupid common-places of the present into shadow, and shed the glowing light of genius and chivalry on the heroic deeds of the past. One of these old legends is like the lightning gleaming on an ancient ruin. I can see your's is a congenial spirit, and that your heart swells well nigh to bursting its narrow bounds, at the tales of the deeds of other times, when your ancestors passed forth to the glo-

rious fray, in all the pomp and pride and circumstance of war !”

“ To harry the defenceless, and carry off, by force or guile, other mens’ goods,” added the laughing Alford, who was in full readiness to enjoy the scene.

“ Come from the north ! did you say, with a pedigree as long as a purser’s story ?” inquired Mr. Mahon. “ Let me see ! I knew two families of the name. Those at H. were descended from an ancient race, and could trace up to the creation—some thought beyond. There were two brothers, fine young men, I hear, though I never saw them since they were children ; perhaps you are one ?”

Mr. Elliott, who, from the *naiserie* of Miss Jones, and the smiles of those around, considered these questions as meant for insults, answered proudly and coldly, “ I have not the honour to be either of these fine young men, or in any way related to them.”

“ Oh ! then it must be the Elliotts of P.” continued Mr. Mahon, nothing daunted by his manner. “ There were Willie and Hobbie, descended from the last reiver, who was hanged at Westburn Flat, or some such thing. One was handsome and silly, and the other could have wiled off a crow’s foot : pleasant men, both ! By the way, I promised to send Willie

Elliott a pointer, and this will be a good opportunity; you can take it up when you return."

"I have no intention of returning for some time," replied Mr. Elliott still more coldly.

"Not return for some time! Why, what will your mother say? For I am sure you are a son of my friend Willie's, by the likeness."

"I have no mother," he said more sternly, still attempting to escape; but Mr. Mahon had laid hold of his button.

"No mother! poor thing! dead then? You must tell me all about it."

"I am not related to the Elliotts of P."

"Not related to the Elliotts of P.!" continued his tormentor. "Then to what family do you belong? Now I recollect, one branch lived at Lackland."

"That is the family, you may be sure," cried the tittering Miss Carleton, "for he is come here to make his fortune by marrying an heiress." Even Mr. Mahon was silenced for a moment by this unfeeling speech; but his natural kindness made him offer assistance before any one else could speak.

"Poor young man! A very honourable family, though rather poor. I will do all I can for you. I will write to-morrow to Colonel Delville, to speak to Lord B."

“To get him an heiress,” sneered Miss Carleton, who felt a spite against him in remembrance of Helen’s reproof.

“We must not allow our vanity to induce us to think that young ladies, rich or poor, are the most desirable things to be attained,” said Helen, with a look at Miss Carleton, which silenced her at least for the moment, as that young lady had believed her out of hearing. Then turning to Mr. Mahon, she added, “I fear I have been a heedless hostess, and did not introduce my guest as I should have done. Mr. Elliott is not related to the family you mentioned, but is a ward of Lord Fitzallan’s;” and smiling on Mr. Elliott, she continued, “You are not acquainted with Mr. Mahon, or you would understand he is never so happy as when trying to serve others.”

Miss Jones’s rhapsody had seemed so like a satire on her own taste for border ballads and ancient families, that our heroine had been meditating on it, till a look at Mr. Elliott showed her the martyrdom he was enduring. Sympathy for him, and indignation at Miss Carleton, caused her to interpose; yet she could not but regret the interference had been necessary, and a glance at Mr. De Roos, who stood by in silence, told her opinion on the subject. She had seen Mr. Elliott striving to veil his pain under

a proud demeanour; observed his sternness when believing himself the object of intended insult; marked him stand like some noble animal at bay, ready to spring upon his foes; but she was not prepared for the instant change on her appearing as his defender.

As at their first introduction, the pride and the sternness passed away; a flush of shame at having been galled, or of *mauvaise honte*, or of some other feeling, came over his sallow cheek, and he looked painfully confused; then, inspired by her kindness, or roused by a look from De Roos, he recovered his self-command, and to her great surprise acted instantly on what she had scarcely meant for a hint. He thanked Mr. Mahon with warmth for his kind offer, though he declined it; and then turning to Miss Jones, in a manner perfectly good humoured and rather playful, he denied the honour of being related to the last border-reiver, or any on the Scottish side, but offered to amuse her with old border tales at some more fitting time. To Helen's still greater surprise, Mr. De Roos joined in the thanks, though he said Lord Fitzallan had his interest too much at heart to let it slumber; and a word to Alford prevented further mischief.

As she was looking over some music at one end of the room, Mr. De Roos approached.

“ Every occurrence of this evening elevates you in the same proportion that it lowers me. You despise me for a want of moral courage in not stepping forward as Elliott’s defender ; but I had only joined the group as you so nobly interfered, and dreaded drawing more attention on you ; aware that mean minds, possessing no generous feelings themselves, consider their own cold-blooded prudence the standard of propriety—”

“ And would blame me for extricating a young man and a stranger, from a painful situation, you would insinuate ?” replied Helen warmly ; “ but you may spare yourself the trouble. I shall not shrink from such blame, when better feelings require I should become obnoxious to it.”

“ I certainly am the most unfortunate of beings ! All I say, and all I do, only lower me in the estimation of one whose esteem is valued more than I dare tell. The vexation I was too provoked and too unpractised to conceal, at finding that Mrs. Jones would gossip and Mrs. Carleton sneer, has made you imagine that I thought your noble defence of Elliott uncalled for, when I only intended to express the depth of my gratitude. Then, had I been less frank, less sincere, had I not told you of our ancient enmity, you would not have thought,

as I see you now do, that I seek to render Elliott's defects more glaring, rather than to hide them. I have not the presumption to ask for a milder judgment, on account of the pain one so harsh occasions; I can but appeal to your kindness and justice, not to decide against me without due consideration, and some positive proof of delinquency. All I ask of you is, to look on my actions without prejudice, and this I know I may demand: you cannot, you will not, be unjust, and make me suffer for my frankness."

Where is the woman's heart that could hear such an appeal untouched?—the incense was so delicate, the whole tone so devoted, and the manner so completely in accordance with the matter. Helen St. Maur was not perfect; she had the weakness, the besetting sins of human nature, and, though aware of the power of flattery, could not always resist its influence: besides, she feared she might have been unjust, and he was certainly wounded at her suspicions. As is wont to be the case with young people of quick feelings, she was apt to let impulse guide, and almost before he had finished speaking, she was making the *amende honorable*, or rather *aimable*.

"I am but a wayward being, Mr. De Roos, so you must not heed my fancies. Then I pique

myself on my penetration, and in such case one must see more than one's neighbours ; so, as the whole county rings with your perfections, to gain any celebrity I was perforce compelled to take the other side. I did not think favourably of your conduct towards Mr. Elliott, but I beg pardon for my misjudgment, and trust you need fear no injustice for the future."

"I can scarcely regret your suspicions, since you own them with such fascinating frankness, and excuse them with such sweetness, as prove they exist no longer ; and I flatter myself to find favour in the recoil. My only fear is, lest I should offend again as regards Elliott. Do not be shocked, when I own the difficulty of conquering my boyish dislike ; and do not wrong me, by thinking that dislike shall do him harm."

"The feelings of youth are not easily conquered ; but his dependence on your family will render the task more easy."

"That idea has already been most powerful, and were I not condemned to hourly annoyance from his *gaucheries*, I think it would soon be conquered. But you shall see how heroically I can behave with the hope of your approbation for my guerdon, and now let me assist you in your search."

They looked over song after song, seeking for one Miss Carleton particularly desired, whilst

his animated remarks caused Helen to forget how long the search had continued.

"I hope I don't intrude!" said Miss Carleton, approaching with a spiteful air. "The people are all wondering what you are both about."

"If the people, as you call them, really expressed wonder, you might have informed them I was looking after the song you insisted on having," replied Helen, in a tone which checked further impertinence. "This is the eighth book I have looked over, and as only this one remains, in which it can be, you had better look over it yourself;" and putting the book into her hands, she left her with Mr. De Roos.

"I begged her not to disturb you," said Mrs. Jones, interrupting her passage, and trying to look very mysterious. "You looked so happy *taty-taty*, as Susy called it; but she would go. I am sure Mr. De Roos is a very happy man, but I always thought Hurlestone would soon have a master."

"I am not aware there is any chance of Hurlestone's having a master, and I must beg you will not again endeavour to prevent my being joined by any of my guests. Had Miss Carleton come sooner, she could have assisted me in my search;" and Helen passed on, leaving Mrs. Jones "all of a doubt," as she said.

Miss Carleton seemed to find the seeking corner still more delightful than had our heroine, and contrived to detain her companion till late in the evening.

“Do not you sing, Mr. Elliott?” enquired Helen, after some previous discourse on music.

“Not here!” he replied, smiling.

“Where then?”

“Only amid my own wild wastes.”

“Nay, but you must grant me one song. I claim it as hostess!”

“Then I must throw myself on your good nature for excuse, as a compliance would only subject me to ridicule. The only lady who has hitherto been kind enough to accompany me, was more inclined than qualified to instruct, and you forget I am quite a savage from the north.”

She fancied there was a hidden meaning in his last words; but not understanding to what he could allude, she only answered gaily:

“You gave me so little cause to remember, I had indeed forgotten it; and after throwing yourself on my good nature, I suppose I must press you no more.”

“What if, grown presumptuous from the success of my first appeal, I were to petition for ‘Auld Robin Gray?’”

"Then I would say, 'Jockey of Norfolk be not too bold.' It would be little short of profanation to sing it in such a company," and she glanced round the room, "at some more fitting time you may claim it."

"I shall not forget the promise, believe me! Will you let the pledge be some other song of your own selecting?"

"I seldom sing in large parties, particularly in my own house; but, being a stranger, your request shall be granted," and she immediately sang one of Alford's choosing.

Mr. Elliott merely thanked her, without saying one word of praise, and she resigned her seat to Miss Jones, who sentimentalised "Jock o' Hasledean."

"Do you know, Miss St. Maur, I am selfish enough to hope you will sing no more this evening. I was not before aware of the power of sweet sounds to rouse feelings almost to madness;" he sighed, then added more gaily, "and your singing is wasted here."

"You learn flattery in the North as well as in the South, I find; but I agree with you, that music is for the happy, and to sooth slight or imaginary ills. It may enliven melancholy, but it brings more poignant pangs to sorrow: the breaking heart revels not in the luxury of agony."

Mrs. Hargrave called her away at the moment, and Mr. Elliott joined a group who were looking over some drawings.

"This is quite perfection!" said Miss Mahon, holding up a very beautiful landscape in body colour.

All were loud in its praise, and Mr. De Roos in particular dwelt much on its beauty.

At length it was handed to Mr. Elliott, who looked at it attentively without speaking.

"That is perfect, is it not, Elliott?" inquired De Roos.

"The design is beautiful, and the execution good; but 'perfect' is a strong word."

"Why, what cold and cautious praise you douce Northerns bestow. Thanks to my lucky stars, though of Northern descent, I was born in the warmer regions of the south. Come! come! play Southron for once, and own the drawing is perfect."

"We leave flattery to you Southrons; leave us Northerns sincerity;" and there was point in his tone. "The drawing, though beautiful in many respects, is not perfect. There is a fault in the perspective of that arch, and the shadow of the tower is incorrect."

"You are too critical for me," replied Mr. De Roos, whilst Miss Mahon said, "Hush!"

glancing towards Helen, who had joined the group unperceived by the criticiser, but not, as she thought, unperceived by the praiser.

“ I beg your pardon, Miss St. Maur,” said the critic, guessing at the cause of the ‘ hush,’ “ I was not aware the drawing was your’s.”

“ I hope, if you had been, you would not have said less, for it is so seldom I can get any one to point out my faults, that your criticism has the charm of novelty as well as truth ; only you must pay this penalty for your sincerity, —to teach me how to amend the errors.”

“ Willingly, if in my power ; but you must allow me first to express my admiration of the other parts of your drawing. Called on so peremptorily for my praise, I fear it was rather churlishly bestowed.”

“ Oh, no ! we will imagine all those pretty things said already ! ”

To her great surprise, he was not only able to convince her and others of the faults, but to shew her how to correct them ; and she gathered enough from his conversation, to be convinced he was no despicable artist, whilst there was such an absence of pretension in all he said, that even the most prejudiced were pleased with his modesty. He accounted for his knowledge, by saying that an artist of great eminence

had spent a summer in the north, and, in return for his acting as guide, had taken great pains to render him a proficient.

The conversation soon turned on foreign countries, and Mr. De Roos charmed all with his animated and entertaining anecdotes of painters and paintings.

“Miss St. Maur,” said Mrs. Carleton, after whispering to her daughter, unheard, as she vainly thought, by Helen, “her carriage will be convenient,” “as Mrs. Hargrave will not attend Mrs. Throgmorton’s ball, I shall be very happy to become your chaperon, and you had better dine and sleep with us. Some people say there is no occasion for a chaperon at a private dance, but I say no prudent mother will sanction such an idea.”

“Thank you; but as I dine and sleep at Mrs. Throgmorton’s, I shall require no chaperon.”

“Oh! just as you please! but I thought I might be of some use to you, though I dare say you prefer Mrs. Throgmorton;” and she drew herself up in her usual style when offended, with or without a cause.

“I assure you I estimate your offer as it deserves.”

The lady retired with a stately step, followed, after a due number of coquettish airs, by her daughter, handed, or rather armed by

Mr. De Roos, who, willingly or unwillingly, was obliged to perform the office.

"Miss St. Maur," he said, on his return, "I have some Italian prints which I am sure would please you. When I pay my visit of etiquette to-morrow, to introduce Elliott in due form, you must allow me to bring them."

"Not only allow, but render you many thanks, as I have a passion for the art!"

"What! are you and De Roos owning a talent for the art of designing?" inquired Alford.

"No!" she replied with an arch smile, "Mr. De Roos positively denies all talent in that way."

"He is only modest; do not believe him."

"Who shall decide when doctors disagree?" assuming a doubtful air.

"I trust the cause to your penetration," replied Mr. De Roos, with a graceful bow and imploring look.

"My 'vanity' you mean, since to that you appeal. Take care you have not prudence and all the moralities against you."

"I assure you, I have heard De Roos praised for designing and drawing," continued Alford.

"Designing to escape from mischief-makers, and drawing inferences and conclusions," rejoined the laughing De Roos, wishing Helen

good night, and then making his adieux to the rest of the company.

“ There are some things, Miss St. Maur,” said Elliott, “ that can be felt, but never told ; and the heart which dictates acts of kindness can alone appreciate the gratitude they excite. I entered your drawing-room with some thoughts of turning misanthrope ; I leave it with feelings of love for all around me. The last few hours have been to me more than years of my past life ; things in them have come across my mind, like some ’witching song heard in earlier years, bringing back the fairy dreams and bright hopes of childhood, not to awaken regret, but to rouse to action. The gloom of despair has fled before your smile, and it only remains to prove worthy of your interest. Good night ! ”

Before she could recover from her surprise, he had left the room.

“ What was your *protégé* saying to his champion ? ” asked Alford ; “ a little while since, and his face was as dull as a November fog, and just now it was absolutely clear, bright, dazzling sunshine—a very dog-day in warmth and brilliancy—whilst you stood ready to enact an April morn, all shine and showers. I verily believe Mrs. Carleton was right ; and that this northern stranger is Michael Scott himself, who has thrown his glamour o’er you.”

“ If you will invent, let your inventions have a little more of probability. If you were to mention Michael Scott to Mrs. Carleton, she would ask if he were any relation to Thomas Scott, who keeps the ‘ Cat and Fiddle,’ on the road.”

“ Why, now you are too hard upon the pompous lady! She would only confound Michael Scott and Walter Scott; and wiser heads might be puzzled to decide which was the greater magician.”

“ But, joking apart now, this I heard: ‘ Nonsense about a quiet, shy young man, and a good-natured hostess. My daughter Harriet says he is not at all shy, but an ugly, awkward bear, who looks sometimes as if he would eat up Mr. De Roos, who is so kind to him; and I say it is not decorous in a young lady to make a fuss about a stranger. I call her his champion!’ ”

“ Am I to believe this? ”

“ Indeed you may. You must promise me never to ask her again.”

“ I should rather blame you for repeating what was never intended for my ears. I am much vexed, for, till she can get a new tale, she will be sure to repeat this to every one she sees, and the *soubriquets* of champion and *protégé*, will become the general talk, whilst the

size and figure of my supposed pet will render the story too good to be soon forgotten."

"I never thought of that!" and he burst into a loud laugh at the idea. "We shall have some new caricatures on the old story of the mouse and the lion. But what will you do?"

"Just as I should have done before. I am not to be daunted by a sneer or a laugh, though I may be annoyed; and you must aid and serve me by being marked in your attentions."

"I knew that would be your decision; nor is it rash, for, in his case, no one can suspect you of a warmer feeling than pity. I would try to frighten Mrs. Carleton into silence, did I not fear it would be with as little success as attended De Roos, when he tried to persuade her daughter not to publish his friend's *gaucheries* and dependence."

"Did he do that?"

"Yes, but with a want of tact I did not expect from him."

"Rather with a want of will, I suspect; and it is this suspicion of unfair play, which makes me urge you to befriend this stranger."

"And to do the same yourself?"

"Why, my pretty playfellow! you should have lived in the days of knight-errantry, and been the bride of Sir Launcelot. Your heart is too warm for these cold times. But vex

not at spite or gossip ; and I will tame and protect this poor bear : and, never fear De Roos, I doubt his power still more than his will to harm."

" You will never rate him as he should be rated."

" *Nous verrons*, as you said before ; and now farewell, for Mrs. Hargrave is yawning, and I am

' The last guest of Hurlestone,
Left talking alone.' "

CHAPTER V.

'Tis not the note of gathering shell,
Of fairy horn, nor silver bell !
No, 'tis the lute's mellifluous swell,
Mixed with a maiden's voice so clear,
The flitting bats flock round to hear !
So wildly through the vault it rung.
That song, if in the green wood sung,
Would draw the fays of wood and plain
To kiss the lips that poured the strain.
The lofty pine would listening lean ;
The wild birch wave her tresses green ;
And larks, that rose the dawn to greet,
Drop lifeless at the singer's feet.

HOGG.

WHEN Mr. De Roos, accompanied by Mr. Elliot, brought over the Italian prints the next morning, they were shown into Helen's own room, where she sat surrounded by books and curiosities, in order and out of order. She was engaged in copying the drawing which had been criticised the night before, and had just finished a sketch, with its faults amended as Mr. Elliott had pointed out. She appealed to him concerning a slight alteration ; then putting it aside,

turned her attention to the prints, whose beauty had by no means been overrated. Their owner seemed in his element whilst showing them, or relating the tales attaching to each ; and so delighted were his auditors that time passed by unperceived, and it would have been difficult to have decided who was the most gratified of the three ; certainly Helen was not the least so. The last leaf was turning as the door opened, and Lady Catherine Alford entered unannounced. All were so deeply engaged that her presence was unremarked.

“ Am I the possessor of the magic belt, that makes its wearer invisible ? If it had been a *tête-à-tête*, I should have slipped out again on tiptoe, but a trio cannot be disturbed.” Then putting up her glass : “ Showing off — wild beasts, I conclude ! ” she added, glancing at Elliott, who looked at her in surprise.

“ Wrong, Catherine ! rather a dissertation on the polite arts, which I am sorry you have lost. With Mr. De Roos you are already acquainted, allow me to introduce his friend and visitor. Lady Catherine Alford, Mr. Elliott.”

An observer must have thought the lady’s bow as slight and cold as bow could be, had not the gentleman’s surpassed it in both respects, and that without his appearing in the slightest degree hurt or offended.

“ Did Alford accompany you ? ” asked Helen.

“ No ; but don’t pout about it, for he is to join me shortly. Really you and Alford are inseparable. I have no advantage of his services as a brother, and he is so much more at Hurleston than at Marston, that I am quite sure, were any of his horses turned loose, they would come over here of their own accord. I fully expect to salute you as sister one of these days.

“ ‘ But soon the rival sisters flew
From kissing to disputing,’ ”

exclaimed Alford, who entered at the moment, and was by no means pleased with Catherine’s burst of ill-humour : “ Miss St. Maur would never deign to ally herself to such a crack brain as I, or such a severe wit as you, or she might be Lady Alford to-morrow.”

“ *L’amour commence par l’amour, et l’on ne sauroit passer de la plus forte amitié qu’à un amour foible*, or I might take you at your word,” said Helen, smiling ; “ but Catherine knows she will never laugh us out of our regard. So welcome to Hurlestone, and your sister must not be jealous if you play brother to us both.”

All this was said so kindly, that even Catherine could not resist it, and answered in a more friendly tone :

“ I am tired of trying to quarrel with you,

Helen, you are so stupidly good-tempered ; and as to quarrelling with Alford, that is still more hopeless, as he never thinks long enough on any one subject to allow it to be accomplished ; so I suppose I must submit to the monotony of harmony at present :” and she turned and entered into an encounter of wits with Mr. De Roos who was no mean antagonist ; whilst the other three failed not to do their parts in “astounding silence.”

“I am to be sure to take home to my lady mother an account of your flower garden ; so come and show all about it,” said Catherine, as she rose from her seat in the dining-room, whither they had adjourned for refreshments.

As they passed one of the windows, Helen perceived a horse, bridled and saddled, feeding in the park with no one near him.

“Whose horse can that be ?” she said. “I fear some accident must have happened.”

“Do not be alarmed : it is mine,” replied Elliott.

“Yours ! How could the servants be so careless ! Do ring the bell, Alford.”

“Pardon me, it was at my desire. He is a great pet, and I often indulge him thus.”

“Will he allow himself to be caught easily ?”

The only answer was a low musical whistle, which the noble animal no sooner heard than he

galloped towards them, tossing his long mane and making innumerable caracoles, with all the wild graces of an untamed colt.

“ I quite envy you the possession of such a beautiful creature,” said Helen, as the graceful animal received with evident pleasure the caresses of his master.

“ No flattery can be too gross to please, when applied to my favourite,” said he, looking on her with an admiring and delighted gaze, as she took part in caressing him. “ Bavioca and I have been friends almost from the hour he was born; and no knight of former days valued his steed more highly than I do mine.”

“ Bavioca! then you are an admirer of the Cid! For the memory of his namesake and noble master, he must share our hospitality;” and she fed him with bread and apples, rather at first to the discomfiture of Bran, who looked some jealousy on this fancied rival, till Elliott supplied him with his full share of the bounty.

“ You had better send the gardener with us, Helen,” said Catherine, impatiently shrugging her shoulders in concert with Mr. De. Roos; “ if once you take to feeding animals, and talking over the Cid, you are about as agreeable company as one of his own gentle sons-in-law.”

“ I fear I am the culprit,” remarked Elliott, “ but I could not resist having my favourite

admired ;” then giving his horse a farewell pat, and waving his hand, the animal neighed, and with the same wild grace returned to his pasture, whilst Bran, obeying a motion from his mistress, went round the house, and joined her as she entered the garden.

Lady Catherine Alford, as has already been seen, neither piqued herself on possessing a good temper, or on concealing a bad one ; still less did she ever trouble herself to veil her likes or dislikes ; *et par conséquence*, her unqualified rudeness to Elliott, and her courtesy to De Roos, showed plainly the estimation in which she held them.

“ What have you done to vex Catherine this morning ?” asked Helen of Alford, as they stood a little apart.

“ You may well ask. I only wonder how you and Elliott can bear her insolence as you do ; his perfect indifference to it, or rather cool contempt, surprises me, and I think has amazed her. I can only account for her ill-humour, as angry because I praised Dormer this morning, and said you only were worthy of him ; and you know she detests him. I doubt if she has forgiven your baffling her questions so skillfully.”

After some time passed in walking about and conversing with Mr. De Roos, for she left

to her brother the task of learning all her mother wished to hear, Catherine returned to the house, and as she passed through the billiard-room challenged De Roos, by whom of course the challenge was instantly accepted.

“ May I petition, then, for ‘ Auld Robin Gray,’ ” pleaded Elliott; “ I may not be long in the neighbourhood.”

“ What! after our discussion on music last night. Is life so very bright that we should court gloom?”

“ Not as a point of morality or matter of fact, but as a poetic fancy I may claim indulgence. You know the poet says —

‘ There ’s such a charm in melancholy,
I would not, if I could, be gay.’ ”

“ Think you the poet had ever known what real sorrow was? Grief and melancholy are as an ocean to a river; but it would be well to instill some of these romantic notions into the country squires, who think of nothing but the material of life; and how they can best eat, drink, hunt, and shoot, through two thousand a-year; yet I doubt, if such feelings be too much indulged, whether they may not lead to indolent despondency, rather than cheerful action.”

“Do you avow yourself, then, an enemy to romance and enthusiasm?”

“*Point du tout!* rather a suffering ally. I would but plead for both being under the guidance of judgment. In one of my wild moods, whilst listening to the avaricious and the cold, I am charged with having exclaimed with De Stael: ‘*Oh, que j’aime l’inutile!*’”

“And you deny the charge?”

“No; I play Mungo: ‘Me say noting.’”

“And yet you warn me against enthusiasm!”

“I spoke as another, rather than myself, and there is this difference—woman may dream, but man must do.”

“There is some difference, I allow; but may man never dream? Must he tread the weary road of life, with the same measured heavy step as the dull beast making his circuit in the mill; intent only on the present, without a thought of the future to brighten the toil, and prove him other than a piece of mechanism? What genius ever won his way to fame, but he gained the ridicule of the cold and the foolish, as an enthusiast?”

“None! none!” she said, as she looked upon him in surprise. The sallow hue of the thin cheek had given place to the vivid glow of excitement, and his eyes flashed like torches gleaming through the midnight gloom. She

almost doubted if it could be the same person she had pitied the night before for his *mauvaise honte* and desolation. Could such a being require pity and attention? Was he not rather qualified to brave every danger, and brunt every difficulty? He marked her look with surprise, and answered it.

“You deemed me the cold and cautious northern that De Roos called me. Can the deep river chafe and murmur like the shallow stream? If it show not a golden sand, if it nourish not the primrose and the violet, it can bear on its bosom the images of loftier things; the gigantic rock, or the majestic forest: but we met only yesterday, and I would not speak of myself. What wonder if others do not understand me, since I cannot comprehend my own heart.” He paused for a moment, and then resumed in a tone almost as playful as her own—“Who can be warned against the dangers of enthusiasm by an enthusiast: as well might a Byron deprecate the gift of poesy; an Alexander, in the blaze of his glory, convince of the vanity of heroism; but to judge from the little I know of the world, neither romance or enthusiasm are very prevalent disorders.”

“Why no, neither cordons nor quarantines are necessary for their restriction. But some author has said, ‘Enthusiasm leads to medita-

tation; character to action; and, to form anything like perfection, they should be united." Now, though I am not quite sure I understand the word 'character,' yet, as the most mystical things are the most admired, I am inclined to think the saying very sublime."

"Perhaps it is correct, if not sublime. A short time since, and I thought that the enthusiasm which dreamt of noble deeds, would ensure their performance;" but I have learnt from experience, painful enough to be remembered, that the hero of a solitude may be little less than a coward in society. But a look—a word may change—has changed—every feeling: given strength to weakness—energy to action—and I yet hope to bear ridicule and insult as a hero should. But we have wandered strangely from our subject," he added abruptly; "and the text of 'Auld Robin Gray,' has furnished a long commentary. I am still inclined to prefer my request?"

" 'Twas throwing words away, for still
The little child would have his will! "

repeated our heroine, with a tone and manner worthy even that most exquisite piece of simplicity.

"Whither bound?" inquired Alford.

"To the drawing-room, to sing 'Auld Robin

Gray:’ and if you can forget your unsentimental habit, of laughing at all melancholy things, you can come and play audience.”

“ I will forget anything to please you;” leading her off with mock gallantry. “ Not that I ought to pardon your impertinence. You cannot imagine the pretty pieces of sentiment I poured forth to Miss Jones yesterday evening, amid the umbrageous branches of the mighty monarchs of the forest. Long as Miss Carleton lingered with her *devoué*, I lingered still longer, though, an arrant cheat, she refused to pay me. By the way, Elliott, what think you of Miss Jones? Some people may call her ridiculous and sentimental, but I say she is one of the most entertaining personages I know;” and he mimicked Mrs. Carleton’s queenlike hauteur to perfection.

“ You may as well laugh out at once, Helen, for I am very good not to play the mimick oftener.”

“ So it is; we pique ourselves on not being worse, instead of deploring our being so bad. Miss Jones has many good qualities, and you should blush to encourage her in making herself ridiculous.”

“ Why, without her sentiment and enthusiasm, she would be but a common-place sort of person, or a tiresome gossip like her mother.”

“No ridicule on enthusiasts, if you please; for Mr. Elliott and I have enrolled ourselves among the number, and allow Miss Jones only the affectation, not the reality.”

“A very agreeable belief to buoy up your ideas of superiority. I have half a mind to enter the lists as her champion. But did you not admire her eloquent border reminiscences, Elliott?”

“To tell you the truth,” he replied, half laughing half confused, and glancing at Helen: “I was too much annoyed, and too much ashamed at having been annoyed, to be a fair judge of her eloquence; and I am the more prejudiced against her, as I fear my conduct gained contempt where I am most desirous to win esteem.”

There was a frankness in this avowal which won both his auditors.

“No such thing!” answered Alford hastily; “her folly, and Miss Carleton’s impertinence, were sufficient excuse; but I am ashamed to own I was the author of the mischief, though not aware of its extent. I must coax Helen to plead for my pardon.”

“Your kindness since, leaves me nothing to pardon, but I must not so easily acquit myself; mere animal courage can bear no comparison with moral, and I feel I have cause to blush for my cowardice.”

“Leave blushing to others,” said our heroine kindly, “they only had occasion for it; what you call moral courage is often nothing more than habit.”

“Now for the song,” cried Alford; “and I will play sentimental on this couch, whilst Elliott shall, novel-like, hang enchanted over your harp.”

“I think my gaunt figure and grim face would look less awkward on the couch; but as no painter or novelist is near, it shall be as you will.”

Fortunately the harp had been tuned in the morning, so the song was commenced without delay. I say ‘fortunately,’ because I have a great objection to the tuning of instruments; it is like a prosing introduction to a spirited work—a wearying prologue to a noble action—something that spoils all the romance, all the witchery of sweet sounds, making them seem of earth, rather “than of high heaven.” The song was sung without quavers or foreign ornaments, but just as Jeannie herself might have sung it; and as the syren, at its conclusion, looked up through her tears, she read in the countenance of the listener a deep homage to her powers; but the moment he saw he was observed he turned to the window, whilst even Alford affected to be busy with a book.

The harp was mute for some moments, when, feeling the silence painful, she struck a few chords with a trembling hand; then with a more decided touch, till they swelled into a full rich harmony of martial music; and then sank again into a sweet and tender strain, as if a hymn for the departed brave.

———“ ‘ Oh, that I were
The viewless spirit of a lovely sound,
A living voice, a breathing harmony,
A bodiless enjoyment—born and dying
With the blest which made me.’ ”

She started at his deep though low voice, and looked up in his face in surprise, whilst her slender fingers yet lingered among the vibrating strings; for she had not been aware that he had again taken his station beside her, and there was that in the melancholy of his glance that won her pity.

“ I hope that is not a very heathenish wish,” she said, striving to smile away his pain; “ for sometimes when *enivrée de la musique*, I too have breathed those same beautiful words.”

“ And I,” echoed Alford, whose sentimental fits were rare and evanescent,—

———“ ‘ Oh, that I were
The viewless spirit of a hothouse pine,
A living sweet—a juicy delicacy—
An epicure’s enjoyment—born and dying
With the tan-pit which reared me.’ ”

“A fit epilogue to ‘Auld Robin Gray,’” said Helen, laughing at the pomp of his recitation.

“After this we had better seek the billiard players.”

As she approached the door she heard the lady say, “Oh, I understand perfectly; a poor dependant—a hanger on—a person who fastens himself on you, to try what he can get—a leech, for which one is obliged to provide to prevent oneself from being sucked to death. I pity you!” and a laugh, as of more than one person, sounded through the apartment. There could be but little difficulty in guessing for whom this was meant, and the countenance of one showed that he understood the allusion. There was a flushing of the cheek, and now and then a deathlike paleness, a fierceness of the eye, a compression of the lips, as though in fear that words should force their way despite the will; a sudden and haughty movement in advance; a struggle, as if the memory that woman’s lips had breathed these words, or that fiery passions were not made for man, was holding a combat with his heart’s deep agony, and then all was comparatively calm again. But the indignant curling of the lip, the concentrated look, and the half-clenched hand, showed “what the storm had been.” Helen’s

eyes had been turned upon him at the commencement of the speech, and had never been withdrawn ; first, from a wish to appear unconscious of its direction, and then, unknown to herself, from the change his features showed : but as the struggle ceased, and she became aware she had been watching him, they were bent on the ground in confusion and sorrow. He felt he had her sympathy ; but, at such a moment, even that conviction had much of bitterness. He was silent for some moments, and then said, in a tone whose very clearness told of the control exercised over it, "It is false ! I have a claim, and will owe nothing to their bounty ;" then passing on, he entered the room with a proud step and a lofty mien that imparted, for the time, a portion of dignity to his gaunt figure.

His entrance caused the billiard-players to look up, and his altered deportment enchained their observation. He looked round, saw which patronized the white, glanced at the index, marked the state of the game, and then said, "Hitherto you have been successful, De Roos, but a change of fortune may come ;" and without waiting for an answer he walked out into the lawn, and employed himself in caressing Bran.

There was nothing particular in the words, and the tone was only remarkable for its extraordinary calmness, yet their impression on the hearers was deep and strange. If Helen saw aright, Mr. De Roos turned white, and then red; Lady Catherine's balls ran *à queue*; cannons were unknown; and the remainder of the game was too wild for any to form an estimate of the merits of the players. Those words had left a gloom both strove in vain to conquer; the lady's pride was wounded, that a nameless stranger should have dared thus to look on her, and that his look could thus have moved her; and the gentleman might have a deeper cause for his feeling, whatever that feeling might be.

The table was, by mutual consent, deserted, and at Catherine's request the horses were ordered. As she stepped out on the lawn, followed by Mr. De Roos, a look of surprise was exchanged between them, to find Elliott talking with open gaiety to our heroine and Alford, and at intervals engaged at high romps with Bran.

"I shall certainly be jealous of you, Elliott," said Alford. "I pique myself on holding the second place in Bran's affections; but you seem such a prodigious favourite, I tremble for my station. Come here, you fright!" The dog

came, licked his hands, and then bounded away, playing a hundred gambols, and alternately caressing his mistress and his other two friends.

“Bran! Bran!” called Mr. De Roos, “you must include me amongst your favorites.”

The animal would have obeyed the call, but a sly motion from Alford retained him; who, bursting into a loud laugh, exclaimed, “Your chance is gone, De Roos; Helen holds her’s a dog of such penetration, that she always yields her judgment to his.”

The person addressed looked disconcerted, though he tried to laugh it off; but Helen detected a scowling look, only half repressed—as if the power to conceal was, for once, less than the inclination. “How can you make such a fool of the dog, and of yourself too?” said Catherine, pettishly, attempting to strike Bran with her whip.

“Confine your rebukes to the tongue,” said Helen, intercepting the stroke. “You have forgotten your promise of civility.”

“*Outré* as you are, I did not then reckon on the contingency of your encouraging bears;” and the polite young lady looked pointedly at Mr. Elliott, but the look was met by one so cool and contemptuous that she turned away, and wishing Helen a hurried good morning,

took the arm of De Roos and walked towards the horses. After placing the lady in her seat, he thanked our heroine for listening to his dull account of the prints, which he begged her to retain at her pleasure, and took his leave, regretting that Lady Catherine had claimed his attendance. A whistle brought Bavioca to his master's side, who, in his mounting and style of riding, showed himself worthy such a noble steed. Mr. De Roos himself did not mount with more ease, hold a more steady seat, or guide with a lighter, firmer reign.

"I would give something to overhear the conversation between Elliott and De Roos, when they leave us," said Alford, as he stooped to adjust his stirrup.

"You would be disappointed," replied Elliott, who had heard the remark. "We rarely speak when alone, but from necessity, or"—he stopped abruptly, then bowing to Helen rode off.

"He is unfortunate," said Helen, in answer to Alford's inquiring look. "Can you not learn his wishes, and promise interest. I will ensure you that of my family."

"You are a dear kind-hearted thing, and it shall be done. I only wish I had a brother worthy of you. Make my regrets for Mrs. Hargrave's headache; I play the pretty to her.

for your sake. And now farewell, once more." He touched his horse with the spur, and was soon riding by Elliott's side. She lingered a few moments, musing on the different and uncommon characters which composed the *parti quarré*, and then entered the house.

CHAPTER VI.

“ A dazzling mass of artificial light,
Which showed all things, but nothing as they were ;
The music, and the banquet, and the wine ;
The garlands, the rose odours, and the flowers ;
The sparkling eyes and flashing ornaments ;
The white arms, and the raven hair ; the braids
And bracelets ; swan-like bosoms, and the necklace,
An India in itself, yet dazzling not
The eye like what it circled ;
The many-twinkling feet, so small and sylph-like ;
All the delusion of the dizzy scene ;
Its false and true enchantments—art and nature.”

BYRON.

MRS. THROGMORTON'S ball on her son's coming of age was expected to be too gay a thing for any one to decline the invitation who had the power of accepting it, and at eleven o'clock the rooms were brilliant with handsome dresses, and lovely or at least animated faces. We will say nothing of aching hearts and aching heads, veiled by wreathed smiles and gay tones. Happy for us, in some senses, that

the fabled ring, whose touch revealed the inmost thoughts, is only to be found in Eastern story; that human beings have no windows in their breasts; that every house is not a palace of Truth. Some few simple people may now gaze on smiling faces, and listen to the laugh, and the jest, and the repartee, and never guess

“ That laughter is a veil that ’s thrown,
To hide from every eye despair.”

The kind-hearted may never imagine that envy and malice can lurk under soft words and gentle tones; and the young and unwrung may dream for a while that the world is indeed the Paradise it looks. The delusion will end soon enough to pleasure even the most rigid.

Not that we think a ball-room either awakens or displays such evil sentiments, more than any other assembly. Those feelings and passions are in the human heart, and they may rule in the open air, or in the quiet parlour, as well as in the splendid saloon. There may be a spirit of pride and display in a hovel; humility in a palace; content in a peasant’s hut; envy in a court; vanity under the decent grey and sober cut of the quakeress; and modesty in the splendid and elegantly fashioned dress. It is the heart, and not the station—the mind, and not the circumstance,—that makes the difference.

Yet is the ball-room an epitome of the world. How many enter it with high anticipations, and leave it with blighted hopes! and then what a jaundiced account do we allow ourselves to give of the “accidents of the hour,”—the rooms were dark—the people looked out of humour—the hostess was inattentive—the music was execrable; whilst we keep back the real cause of our discomfiture. Ask another. A soft light pervaded the apartment—all looked happy—the hostess indefatigable—the music beautiful; and this one also reveals not the real cause of her pleasure. And is it not thus in life? Our adversity, or our prosperity; our sorrows, or our pleasures; our prejudices, or our affections; do they not give the colour to our descriptions of what has been—the hopes of what may be? What office more thankless than that of giver of a fête, if we pique our vanity on universal applause. To hope to pass through life unscathed, unblamed; to find the philosopher’s stone, the waters of oblivion, or the sense of a madman, are hopes possessed of equal wisdom. But she who gives a fête from ostentation, cannot complain if the criticisms of her guests are withheld by no friendly feeling. The entertainment is given to please the inviter and the invited, and the former must not expect the latter to be grateful.

And such a fête was this. The lady, who had been a great heiress, availed herself of the excuse of her son's coming of age, to amaze the natives with her magnificence. There were four men to chalk the floors, six men to decorate the rooms, Gunter for the supper, Weippert for the music. Weippert and Gunter themselves in the country! As may be imagined, every thing was *déguisé*, from the anxious vanity of the hostess, to the chicken for the supper and the old Scotch tunes for the quadrilles.

Who could resist such a combination? Feet, which had been allowed to hope for repose, were practised to rival Mercandotti. Milliners and dress-makers, who had been on the point of giving up business in despair, were obliged to assume the midnight lamp to complete their orders; flys had new wheels; chaises new poles; mammas had new turbans; young ladies new dresses; whilst papas, in the anticipation of pines and champaign, furnished brooches and chains. In short, in the words of the 'County Chronicle,' the rooms were crowded to excess, and were dazzling with an unparalleled display of rank, beauty, and fashion; in our own, the lady of the mansion in magnificent attire, orient with jewels, received her guests with a sort of splendid courtesy, awakening awe, ridicule, pity,

or contempt, according to the moods of her visitors.

With no hopes or fears on the occasion, our heroine had nothing to prevent her enjoying the gay scene around her. We shall not repeat now, or hereafter, the flattering speeches which met her ear, nor enumerate those who would fain have won her, for herself or her riches ; but confine ourselves to the proceedings of those already introduced to our readers, merely stating it required more than mere natural humility to withstand the dangers with which such universal homage surrounded her. As if to make up for his delay on two former occasions, Mr. De Roos was one of the first arrivals, and after paying his compliments to his hostess, so completely did he succeed in engrossing Helen's attention, that after a more than polite bow to Elliott, and making room for him beside her, she paid him no more attention. Even the situation she had provided him was not long retained, for seats soon became a scarcity, and too polite to retain his when a female had none, he resigned it to an elderly lady who looked fatigued, and was shortly separated from our heroine by the crowd. And such a crowd ! Even the elegant were pushed and elbowed, and gauze and blonde had cause to mourn the scuffle.

The powers of conversation possessed by De Roos were considered by his friends as almost unrivalled, and as that was a fascination which Helen rarely sought to resist, she was soon too much delighted to think what suspicions her interest might awaken. If his mind had not the depth and power of Dormer's, his conversation could boast of more esprit and brilliancy. The one struck, the other wooed; the one was the lightning that would set the forest in a blaze, the other the playful flashing on a summer's evening, among beds of brilliant flowers. Neither our heroine nor Mr. De Roos were persons of such insignificance as to be unseen, or unobserved when seen; and though his words bore no lover-like meaning, yet he conversed in so low a tone, and his manner was so earnest, that many agreed the heiress, if not already won, would not long protract the siege. As usual! some wondered, some approved, some disapproved, and some few disbelieved. Miss Carleton on hearing it tossed her head, said she was sure it was no such thing, and shouldering through the crowd, disturbed the *tête-à-tête*.

"Gentlemen, will you lead your partners to the dancing-room, if you please?" said the lady of the mansion; and the young beauties prepared to look demure, and thinking of anything rather than being asked for their hands, whilst

the young gentlemen ran their fingers through their hair for the last time, and drew on their white gloves. The laughing glances of Helen and De Roos met; and saying, "I see I must make preparations," De Roos performed the same operations with inimitable grace, at the same time exhibiting a caricature.

"Now, Miss St. Maur, may I presume to request the honour of your hand?"

"It would be impossible to refuse!" was her laughing reply; and entering the dancing-room, they took place opposite Alford and Miss Throgmorton.

"What think you now, Miss Carleton?"

"That a gentleman never dances the first dance with the lady he likes best;" and with the usual toss of the head, she gave her hand to a young officer, and joined the dance.

The conversation and attentions of De Roos to his fair partner, were not less earnest in the dancing than they had been in the reception room; and they who saw were confirmed in their conjectures: but engaged as she was, she found time to speak to Alford.

"Where is Annie Grey? I am afraid she will not find Mrs. Roberts a very agreeable chaperon, and I almost wish I had been a mistress for her sake."

"If such be your wish, you need not wait

long I suspect," glancing at De Roos. "Annie is in that corner behind the orange tree, shrinking like the sensitive plant, and heartily repenting having yielded to her grandfather's wish. She has at last promised to dance the next quadrille with me, and I have engaged you shall be our *vis-à-vis*; and remember, you dance with me the one after."

"It seems I have no option, so must submit to my fate."

The dance concluded, she sought Annie Grey, by whom she was most warmly welcomed.

"Alford says you are a sad trembler."

"Not when you or he are with me."

"We must be your defenders then; but remember, in return, when your grandmother is better, I will no longer be cheated out of my visit."

"I love you too well; but indeed you will find me very stupid."

"I will run the risk," and introducing Mr. De Roos, with his assistance she made her friend forget half her terrors, till claimed by Alford, as his partner, with an embarrassed air, that told a tale he little wished concealed.

"How do you do, Miss St. Maur?" said Mrs. Carleton, with even a loftier mien than usual. "This heat is intolerable! Some say it could not have been helped with such a crowd; but I say it might by a different ar-

rangement, which I explained to Mrs. Throgmorton, but some people will never take advice. Persons think that is natural, but I say, it is the sign of a weak mind. I told her the other day, that her dairy-maid knew nothing about her work, and could not make butter, but always churned the cream into whey, and that I could recommend an excellent one; and she absolutely told me she left all those things to her housekeeper. If people will not be advised, they must take the consequences. Pray who is that little thing in plain white muslin, without any ornament in her hair?" staring at Alford's partner.

"Miss Grey," replied Helen warmly, "one of the sweetest and loveliest of human beings."

"I beg pardon. A protégée of yours, I conclude."

"A friend!" said Helen pointedly, provoked at her insolence.

"Oh, Mrs. Carleton! you know every body!" said Mrs. Johnson, a widow lady with a small fortune, and a time-serving son. "Can you tell me who that ugly man is talking to Mrs. Mahon? so vulgar! so awkward!"

"I cannot see him; but, from the description, it must be Mr. Elliott;" and she looked triumphantly at Helen.

"Who is Mr. Elliott?"

“ I really know nothing about him, but Miss St. Maur can tell you ; he is a great favourite of her’s. Some persons call him and Mr. De Roos ‘the Contrast,’ but I call them ‘Beauty and the Beast.’ There are some strange people here to-night ! ”

“ There he is ! ” cried Mrs. Johnson, pointing him out.

“ That is Mr. Milton,” said Helen, quietly, “ a brother of Mrs. Carleton’s. Mr. Elliott, though in ill health, is neither hideous nor vulgar.” And, without waiting a reply, she plunged into the mysteries of *chassez, dechassez, traversez, croissez*.

“ Now do you deserve an ovation for having put down that woman so quietly ! ” said Alford. “ I wish Mrs. Throgmorton’s dairy-maid would make away with her. Hear her telling the same story over and over again ! ” and a moment’s listening proved the truth of his assertion.

“ What do you think of that young woman in white muslin ? ” inquired Mr. Johnson, the son, a short young man, with a good leg and foot, the only commendable parts about him, unless some might choose to admire an enormous pair of whiskers, nourished with great care. “ John Carleton thinks she is pretty ; and she seems to have a good ancle.” And he

edged close up to Mr. De Roos, to whom this question was addressed, that he might be believed on confidential terms.

“Tolerable!” replied De Roos, carelessly; “well enough for a country girl; but she wants style.”

“Exactly so! I quite agree with you,” said Mr. Johnson, who never ventured to have an opinion of his own, till it had been sanctioned by some one of consequence. “And what do you think of Lady Catherine Alford?”

“Quite aristocratic!”

“Exactly so! that is just what I thought. Some fine women here to-night,” addressing Alford; “your sister, for instance; something quite aristocratic; and Miss Throgmorton, a fine fashionable-looking young woman; and Miss St. Maur, with her distinguished loveliness. There are some others, tolerable. There is that little girl in white; Grey, I think they call her; she has a tolerable leg and foot, and is rather pretty—well enough for a country girl! but she has no style!”

“I know nothing about her style; but she has a very elegant gait, and is one of the loveliest young women in the room;” and he gave the little man a look which made him appear still less.

This was a dilemma poor Mr. Johnson had not contemplated. That Lord Alford and the Hon. Mr. De Roos should differ, was a misfortune beyond his imagination ; and he would have dwindled into nothing, had not the bright idea struck him, of consulting a third person. Miss St. Maur was the most distinguished in sight, and to her, therefore, he applied. "What is your opinion of Miss Grey?" for he no longer ventured to call her a girl.

"What must be the opinion of every one of taste, that her beauty is almost more than earthly," replied Helen in a decided tone, well aware of his character.

"Exactly so ! I quite agree with you !" and away he went, to sport this idea as his own, to those to whom he might venture to play fine, and then say Lord Alford and Miss St. Maur agreed with him.

"I am in a passion fever," said Alford, on his return, "notwithstanding the ice I have bought you, Helen."

"What is the matter?"

"Why, that impertinent puppy, Johnson, vexed me, first with his insolent criticism ; and then Mrs. Jones teased me about the beauties ; and that intolerable Mrs. Carleton is calling De Roos and Elliott 'Beauty and the Beast,'

because she thinks it a clever thing, and telling every one about your two protégés; and now I hope you are as angry as I am."

"Not quite! It is too hot; but I hope Mr. Elliott will not hear her. Have you seen him lately?"

"Not since I first entered the room, when he was watching you and De Roos, and, I suppose, thinking what others thought."

"My lord, you must allow me to introduce you to a friend of mine;" and Mrs. Throgmorton bore off her prey before the blushing Helen could receive or offer explanation.

"Dear me! not dancing!" said Miss Carleton, stepping back from the circle of waltzers, as much to show off a flirtation with a gallant dragoon as for any other purpose.

"I never waltz!" replied our heroine.

"Oh, no! you are afraid; it might make you giddy," retorted the young lady, concluding with a laugh due to the imagined wit of her speech.

"My reasons are too old-fashioned and too common-place, to be worth repeating."

"I forgot, you are so very demure! What do you think mamma calls that dear creature, De Roos, and his hideous companion? 'Beauty and the Beast;' is not that good?" and she turned to her partner for applause.

“Capital!” and both indulged in a loud laugh.

“I was in such a fright just now, I really thought the Beast was going to ask me to dance; and I would not stand up with him for the world; but De Roos says I may do as I like to Elliott, provided I do not refuse him;” and she flirted her fan, and tried to blush and look down. Then continued in a tone of affected pity—“I am afraid, Miss St. Maur, you did not find Mr. De Roos very pleasant; he says he is generally dull the first dance, when obliged to choose his partner from etiquette.”

“I found Mr. De Roos quite as pleasant as usual,” said Helen, smiling at the impertinence; a smile not lost on the dragoon, who enjoyed the ridicule of the scene.

“Oh, did you! Well, I am glad of that; I was afraid you had not; but I hope that horrid Elliott will not ask me, for I have a terror of being the cause of a duel.”

“I do not think you need be alarmed on either account.”

“I am not so sure of that,” in a tone of pique.

“Who is this horrid monster?” inquired her partner.

“ Mr. Elliott ! and he looks like a skeleton, and is sallow and lame, and so ugly ;” and she made a movement of loathing.

“ If you knew how he came to be so thin and so sallow, you would not think him ugly any more,” interposed Miss Grey, in a very low, sweet voice, blushes spreading over cheek and neck and brow at the sound of her own voice.

“ And pray how came he to be so thin, and so sallow, and so ugly ?” inquired Miss Carleton, with a contemptuous stare.

Miss Grey paused a moment, confused and abashed ; then gaining courage from the same good feeling which had prompted her first interposition, she answered the sneering question in the same low voice as before, and as concisely as possible.

“ As Mr. Elliott was walking near a wood, he heard cries for help and the sound of blows ; he rushed to the spot, and saw one man lying on the ground, and trying to protect himself from the attacks of three others. Mr. Elliott took the weak side, and wrenching a stick from one of the robbers, obliged them to leave the place, after receiving himself such severe wounds in the contest, that, when others came up, they found him insensible.”

“ A very pretty story indeed ! but what voucher is there for it ? ”

Even Miss Grey’s meek spirit was moved by the insult, and she answered with dignity—
“ A letter from Miss Hopkins, the sister of the gentleman whose life was saved by Mr. Elliott’s gallantry, and which may be seen at Marston Parsonage.”

“ A wonderful tale, truly ! I will tell mamma the Beast has turned out a Don Quixote.”

“ If you merit the name of woman, you will better know how to appreciate a brave act,” exclaimed the indignant Helen.

The young lady coloured at the rebuke, turned away abruptly, and, to hide her confusion, engaged instantly in the whirling dance.

“ Who is that young lady in pink ? ” inquired Annie Grey of our heroine. “ Scarcely any one speaks to her, and I fancy she sighs when she sees every one else dancing and happy ; just as I should sigh, if you and Lord Alford were not so kind to me.”

“ It is Miss Mason, and I am grieved to see her slighted because she is poor and plain ; let us go to her, and get Alford to find her a partner. He is above such meanness ; ” and, taking her companion’s arm, she crossed over, and sat talking to Miss Mason for some moments,

with a manner to shew all that she had sought pleasure to herself in the interview. Then, taking Miss Grey's arm, she turned towards the conservatory, thinking she should find Alford there. As she was delayed by the crowd, she overheard the following conversation :

“ Who is that dowdy ? ”

“ A Miss Mason ! The daughter of a defunct country attorney, who did not cut up well,” answered Mr. Johnson. “ Her father was agent, or some such thing, to Mr. Throgmorton, at least I think Lord Banden said so one day when we were travelling together. Hearing this, I said, ‘ Well, to my mind, the marriage bonds of the daughter may be as galling as the money bonds of the father.’ ‘ He ! he ! he ! that’s good,’ said his Lordship, ‘ I shall remember that.’ ”

“ Do you mean when you rode on the outside of the same coach from Reading to Windsor ? ” inquired Mr. Dalton, a sarcastic elderly gentleman, of whom more hereafter.

The abashed little man was saved the trouble of a reply, by some one saying, “ Having asked her, I wonder Mrs. Throgmorton does not provide her a partner.”

“ That might not be such an easy job,” exclaimed young Carleton ; “ gentlemen like to

choose for themselves," arranging his neck-cloth, and looking down at his feet as he spoke.

"For shame! no rebellion. Gunter, Weipert, and champagne should command obedience to any behest," remarked Mr. Dalton.

"For any thing else?" returned Mr. John Carleton, not exactly knowing how to understand this speech.

"She looks so anxious to dance, I should not wonder if she attempted a *pas seul*," said another.

"Will you not take pity on her, Mr. De Roos?" asked the provoking Mr. Dalton. "I heard you utter such noble sentiments to Miss St. Maur, that I cannot possibly doubt your standing forth as the champion of the distressed. I think you said wealth and beauty were as dross compared to the ore of the mind and heart?"

"I have no doubt Mr. De Roos will when he hears that Miss St. Maur sat by her some time."

"I dare say Mr. De Roos will not think it necessary to patronise all Miss St. Maur's protégées," retorted Miss Carleton, with the usual toss of the head.

"You are quite right, Miss Carleton; and I own I have no longer the self-denial to delay

soliciting the honour of your hand;" and he led her off, thus avoiding an answer to Mr. Dalton.

"Oh, man! man!" exclaimed Helen, half in jest, half in earnest, as she passed on with her companion. "He prides himself on his superiority, boasts of his freedom, and yet in truth is the slave of wealth and beauty, and a thousand meaner things besides; the deceiver of others and himself; and oh, woman! woman! how clear-sighted can you be, when not blinded by vanity or love."

"Surely all men are not ungenerous, dear Miss St. Maur?"

There was a tremor in the questioner's voice, which made Ellen look at her attentively for a moment. A smile succeeded to the look, and then a shade of anxiety. Annie Grey looked up for an answer, and then looked down with a blush, though she knew not and guessed not why.

"All men are not ungenerous, dear Annie, though I suspect there are few who do not overrate beauty. Alford, for one, would never slight poverty or plainness, though his rank and the wishes of his father will lead him to wed with rank and fortune."

"Do you not think Mr. De Roos will dance

with Miss Mason?" asked Miss Grey hastily, as if to change the conversation.

"Will the moon give the warmth of the sun?"

"But he did not say he would not?"

"It is not politic to say things which may be repeated."

"Perhaps if you were to ask him?"

"He would do it instantly, and proclaim the cause to the world, unless he could plead an excuse sufficiently plausible to deceive me."

"I shall never understand things," said Annie, with simplicity; "but there is Mr. Elliott."

"Yes, he would require no bidding; but that must not be till Alford has danced with her. It would but subject him to more ridicule."

"I have not seen you dancing, Mr. Elliott," she said, a few moments after, whilst her admiration of his bravery imparted a more than usual kindness to her manner, or rather ennobled its character. "I fear you are suffering pain;" and she glanced at his foot, which scarcely touched the ground, as he leant against a pillar.

"Oh no, I thank you! I am suffering from no bodily pain, and my foot is so far recovered that I hope soon to lose all sign of lameness."

"Then you despise, or dislike dancing?"

"Neither; I am fond of it."

"And yet you do not dance! Have the ladies of our county no charms for you?"

"The deficiency of attraction is on my part."

"How do you know this?"

"You are not acting with your usual kindness by these strict inquiries; it is absolute cruelty to force the confession that I have not danced because nobody will dance with me."

There was something so *naïf* in this confession; so perfectly candid and open, and so entirely free from anything like confusion or pique, though there was a slight tinge of melancholy in the tone, as if a feeling of desolation mingled with his indifference, that she was much surprised, more pleased, and answered, in his own strain, though with sufficient interest not to have her words misunderstood. "I suspect you of a libel on the tastes of our ladies, and am inclined to become their defender. Confessing the mortification so freely, I am amazed you have been so easily repulsed."

"Not as easily, perhaps, as you imagine; though having had the wisdom to attend to hints, I spared myself the mortification of a refusal. I had the pleasure of hearing Lady

Catherine Alford name me the Northern Bear; and, in answer to a whisper from De Roos, decline, with a contemptuous laugh, the post of leader. I had also the delight of hearing Miss Carleton declare to a group of young ladies, who perfectly agreed with her, I was the most 'hideous monster' she had ever beheld; that her mother called De Roos and myself 'Beauty and the Beast;' and that she was in a horrid fright lest I should ask her to dance, though nothing should induce her to stand up with me. I heard Mrs. Mahon tell her daughter, who would, I believe, have taken pity on me, to say she was engaged, and not encourage my being with her. And even Miss Jones, as I was no border chief, took care to let me understand, before I could ask, she was engaged three deep. Who can accuse me of having been easily repulsed?"

"No one!" said Helen, glowing with indignation. "Yet should you not judge of all by a few. There are still some who would feel pleasure and honour in your attentions."

"Pleasure and honour 'from a stupid country scarecrow, as sallow as a kite's foot! patched and lame,' to borrow the description of Miss Carleton: it may not be. Your pity, Miss St. Maur, misleads your judgment."

"I will not have my judgment impugned. I repeat there are some who would deem it plea-

sure and honour to dance with Mr. Elliott, and who hold patch and lameness and thinness and sallowness, as honourable trophies of an act of bravery."

"I was not aware that you knew—" and he stopped in confusion, whilst the sallowness of his cheek gave place to a bright glow, which lingered awhile, lending to the thin face almost a look of beauty.

"Nor did I know it till a few minutes since. Yet it did but confirm my former impressions; for I pique myself on my penetration as well as my judgment."

"I cannot rob myself of the pleasure a belief in both affords, and this night has lost its melancholy character; but I will not link the noble and the lovely with an object of contempt even for the short space of a quadrille."

"Would you force a lady to such a breach of etiquette as to signify her assent unasked?"

"Could you? Would you?" he paused, for a wild tumult of feelings rushed through him. He knew he was designated as her protégé, and were she to dance with him, it might subject her to unpleasant remark. Was it generous to allow her to do this? And yet how could he resist what had been his brightest hope for days? How could he, by declining, appear to

fling back the kindness offered? Fortunately for his pleasure or his generosity, another decided the debate.

“Miss St. Maur, may I hope the intense and almost overpowering heat will not deprive me of the supreme felicity of following your graceful movements in the quadrille, after the one just forming, and attending you at the refecton.”

This was uttered in a lisping tone and mimicking manner, by a most interesting dandy, as Miss Jones called him.

“Your petition has been presented rather too late. Mr. Elliott is already destined for the high station; and that too, without duly appreciating the honour, I suspect;” she added in a low tone, with arch look.

“Believe it not?” said Mr. Elliott, every feature glowing with such animated gratitude that, to avoid further expressions of pleasure, she dismissed the affected youth in search of Alford.

“Will you never be wearied in kindness, Miss St. Maur? Are you not yet tired of patronising the ‘northern bear, the wild ourang-outang?’”

“What can you mean?” inquired the amazed Helen, blushing and confused at his penetrating look. “Surely—”

“Surely De Roos could not have betrayed you? you would say,” he replied in a tone of disappointment; “pardon me, if for one moment I doubted the truth of his tale. My debt of gratitude is but the greater, and the subject shall never again be even alluded to.”

“No, Mr. Elliott; having once been entered on, the subject must be cleared up, even at the expense of my blushes,” her indignation at De Roos and sympathy for Elliott half mastering her confusion. “Will you tell me by what means, and for what purpose, my idle nonsense has become known?”

“The former I can explain, the latter must be guessed. De Roos, by mistake, as he would have me believe, handed me a letter to his father the morning of my first visit to Hurleston; from which I learnt you had heard a description of my person, and to pleasure him had promised to patronise this northern bear; this wild ourang-outang. He strongly, even passionately, urged me to silence, but I was too indignant to give a pledge, though had I not, fascinated by your kindness, hoped and believed the statement false, I should not have mentioned it. I have been rightly punished for my presumption, and must pay the penalty by apologizing to you and him. I determined to decline your invitation, and persisted in my

refusal, till a taunt won me to a proud compliance. Why he made such a point of my accompanying him; or why he chose to reach Hurlestone so late; for the delay was his contrivance (though so skilfully managed as to make me almost believe it occasioned by myself), I know not, unless it was that one and all might mark the contrast of our *entrées*. Yet he is too little of a coxcomb to manœuvre for a petty triumph, and I have yet to learn a deeper reason. With all the wounded vanity and indignation of a simple country youth, who, living in solitude and unaccustomed to slights, could neither parry a jest, nor repress an insolence, but by an exertion of strength ridiculously disproportioned to the annoyance—and who had not yet learnt to rate himself as others rated him—I entered your drawing-room with the sublime intent of crushing the impertinence of patronage. What a revulsion of feeling did your words, your manner, occasion! I found pity, instead of patronage; sympathy, instead of impertinence. I felt the folly of being proud, and then the consciousness of being awkward. I heard the laugh of ridicule, and the words of disgust; but I met from you kindness the most touching, the most considerate; you seemed to guess at every embarrassment, that you might prevent or alleviate

it; till I ceased to blush at my own weakness, since it afforded such a flattering display of benevolent feeling. The mortifications I had met with since I left my native wilds, were all forgotten. What were they to your sympathy! My mind resumed its healthful tone; my spirit again rose buoyant at the words of interest. But the dream is broken—the beautiful fancy fled for ever—and I must learn coldness and fortitude from sterner instructors.”

He turned away as he ceased, but Helen’s gentle tones recalled him.

“I should be piqued at the readiness with which you discard fancy and dream, and deprive me of my virtues, could you not plead some cause for so harsh a judgment; if that judgment can be defended, which is given on the hearing of one side alone.”

“The words of De Roos were false then,” he said, interrupting her eagerly? “Can you forgive my precipitate judgment?”

“Not exactly false, I fear,” said Helen in a hesitating voice.

“Not exactly false!” he repeated; his animation dying away, as he marked her confusion; and then he stood before her with a cold, almost proud, demeanour.

She marked the change; it increased her confusion, and she was silent.

“Again I must ask pardon for my presumption,” he said proudly; shrinking with the sensitiveness of a feeling mind nurtured in solitude, from the galling idea of having been made a dupe and a ridicule; and that too, by one whose esteem he coveted. “Permit me to express my gratitude for the past, by whatever motive prompted, and to assure you there shall be no further intrusion for the future.”

“Stay, Mr. Elliott,” said Helen, in a tone which though friendly was rather peremptory. “The past must be explained before the future can be determined on; an explanation is due to both.”

He spoke not, but stood before her watching her changing cheek, for her momentary firmness had deserted her, and she was again blushing and confused. She could not but feel the awkwardness of her situation, and that every moment of continued silence must increase it. She felt too for him, and after a short pause she said, meeting his look, though colouring as she did so:

“Can you read a lady’s blushes so ill, as to set her down for a hypocrite because she chance to change colour? I have not deceived you.”

“Your pardon; I thought you had owned the expressions.”

“Nay then, if I am to be condemned for those ugly words, I may as well say guilty at once, and throw myself on your mercy. And yet,” she added, glancing up with one of her own bright witching smiles, “you look so very inexorable, I am half afraid to venture?” and then she looked down again in beautiful confusion.

“Inexorable! and to you! Think it not!” and every appearance of pride was gone. “I will believe you against the world; will deem you incapable of wrong, though my own senses avouched it.”

“Such conduct would be neither wise or desirable,” she replied more coldly, startled at the sudden warmth of his manner. “I simply ask a hearing of my explanation.”

“But I require no explanation; and own all the pride and folly of having dared to doubt.”

“You are mistaken! Five minutes hence you will desire the very explanation you now refuse; and hear it you must, for my satisfaction, if not for your own. It is not very agreeable to be obliged to own having called names,” she continued more playfully, “and yet I suppose I must be candid enough to do so. And now for the palliating circumstances that may win me forgiveness. I had heard any thing but a flattering account of you; owed

some propitiation to Mr. De Roos, whom I had just offended; and, as he could not come without you, insisted on your accompanying him, saying, as a mere *façon de parler*, for I see you must hear all, that he and I could make any thing the fashion short of an ourang-outang. I so detest the idea of ‘patronising,’ that, if I mentioned the word, it must have been in jest. There now, the horrid tale is out. Am I forgiven? or is there any other question you would ask?”

“Forgiven! It is I should ask forgiveness, for having wronged you even in thought; but that letter did not state the matter as it should have done, and yet —” he hesitated.

“Yet what? I owe you something for forgiving me so readily, and judging against appearances.”

“Well, then! And yet you started when I entered the room. Did you find me more hideous than even De Roos had painted me? and I know his is no friendly hand.”

“Is not this unconscionable, and showing no mercy for my blushes? Must I account for my looks as well as my words. Well, be it so; I find an honourable retreat requires far more skill than a brilliant advance. What, if I had pictured Mr. Elliott to myself a gawky youth, with lank yellow hair, blue eyes, more

arms than he could well tell how to dispose of; a leg too many, perhaps a pull of the hair in the country style for a bow, and as much of blushing as his hostess exhibits !”

He could not but laugh. “Oh, that this were the palace of truth, and I might demand in what the real differed from the fancied !”

“Were your wish gratified, Mrs. Throgmorton’s rooms would no longer be crowded. I for one should depart instantly; for worlds I would not hear the secret opinion of those I love, lest wounded vanity should lessen my affection! But I do not mean to shrink from your question. I started at seeing one so different from what I had expected; so stern, so proud; but another look enabled me to read your feelings, as you have described them, and to interest me in your fate.”

“That is, you pitied my weakness.”

“Now are you like your sex! going to quarrel with receiving at one moment, what you will pretend to sigh for the next. The pity I felt for Mr. Elliott was not such as I should have felt for the blushing yellow-haired youth I had expected; the proudest, ere the evening was over, need not have shrunk from being its object; and since Annie Grey’s tale, pity is out of the question. Are you content

now? I never made so many confessions before!"

"Nor would you now, were I more favoured by rank or fortune: presumption itself could not mistake your kindness; yet if not too bold, I would make one request. You did not say who had done me the honour of depicting me, but I do De Roos no injustice in ascribing it to him. I will not quarrel with him for his personal description; indeed, I am at this moment too happy to quarrel with any; nor dare I ask what further he said. I would but entreat a kindly judgment on any character he may give me."

"You doubt his friendship and sincerity then?"

"Doubts have long since been dispelled by certainty; and my forced sojourn with him is as hateful to him as, a short time since, to me. I am not what he would have me thought, and the time may come when he shall be forced to do me justice."

"Mr. Elliott," said Helen hastily, alarmed at his rising colour and flashing eye; "I hope I need not point out, that from the peculiarity of our late conversation, delicacy to me demands that this subject should never be mentioned, either to Mr. De Roos or others."

“Fear not!” he said, anxious to quiet her alarm. “What has passed shall be remembered, but not repeated. De Roos and I can never be friends; fire and water might rather mingle in the same stream. But I dare not lift my hand against a fellow-man, to redress a private wrong; and even he would scarcely seek my life, though he would blight my prospects and stain my character. If he only ridiculed my person and manners, I frankly forgive him;” and he fixed a penetrating look on Helen.

She looked confused, remembering he had made heavier charges; but she rallied almost instantly, and met his gaze without shrinking.

“Only very extraordinary circumstances can warrant the disclosure of a private conversation. I accept your pledge of silence, and believe me, will not see through the glass of another: in return, you must not let what I am going to say pain you. Being on such terms with Mr. De Roos, it may be unpleasant to apply to him in any way. Alford is already your friend; and my cousin, Mr. Euston, will not be less so.”

“Do not think me such a churl as to feel pain at your kindness, because it brings more fully home the desolation of my fate; but I have no words to thank you. What I seek

from De Roos and his father is justice. If they prove my claim to be false, they are quit of me for ever, as I will receive no favour at their hands; should they allow it, I shall purchase a commission and win glory or death: nor will I hesitate to avail myself of your kindness. Alford has already offered his interest, and I am not too proud to accept those favours which a noble mind can offer, and a noble mind receive."

"Remember then," said Helen, much moved, "you are not destitute of friends under any circumstances, and I claim your acquaintance for my cousin."

He answered only by a look, and a slight inclination, and then turned away abruptly. But it was such a look, that Alford who came up at the moment stared after him in wonder; and report says, Helen never forgot it.

"What magic wand do you possess, Helen?" asked Alford. "There are all the people in the room, save some old dowagers, to whom he resigned seats, vowing Elliott is a stupid ill-looking bear; but no sooner do you speak to him, than he looks like Etna in a playful mood; all brightness, and I had almost said all beauty. What did you say to him?"

"Promised him Robert's interest joined to yours."

“That is your own under the veil of Robert’s name: well, even he will not be jealous of Elliott.”

“Something like it certainly, but no need to furnish the gossips with tales. They can find or invent enough without my aid. Are you disengaged? Poor Miss Mason has been sitting still all the evening scarcely noticed by any.”

“So you want me to take pity on her! What do you think of that, Elliott? Miss St. Maur expects me to dance with all the poor, plain, dowdies in the room, because no one else will!”

“Miss St. Maur asks nothing but what she does herself. I wish my rank were such as to enable me to fulfil her kind intentions.”

“After such a speech I can linger no longer; but it is a horrid disappointment, for I thought she meant to ask me to dance with herself.”

“You could not possibly suspect me of such an impropriety;” and she glanced archly at Elliott. “But away! or you will be too late.”

“If you think it expedient that Miss Mason should bear the ridicule of the two despised ones dancing together, I am at your command.”

“Thank you! After Alford has resigned her hand, she will, I am sure, be delighted; and you shall be my *vis-à-vis*.”

“Like the pale moon winning our light from you.”

“It is not requisite you should live in the Palace of Truth. I verily believe you have the fabled ring in your possession.”

“I must answer in other words than my own:—

‘ Her goodness and her worth to spy,
You need but gaze in Ellen’s eye.
Not Katrine, in her mirror blue,
Gives back her shaggy banks more true,
Than every free-born glance confest
The guileless movements of her breast.’ ”

“Then it seems I am to bear the blame of your embarrassing penetration. I doubt if the Ariosto of the North would approve of such a perversion of his poetry; and I must take lessons in deception, or I can never hope to keep a secret.”

“Room, ladies, room!” exclaimed Alford, returning, and insisting on the two fair damsels granting him a seat between them.

“What is the matter?”

“Matter, Miss St. Maur? Matter enough! If you will not keep off that horrid Mrs. Carleton, there will be murder before the evening is over;” and he fanned himself violently.

“It is a serious affair, I perceive; and we will do our *dévoir* to prevent such a fearful

catastrophe. But take pity on our curiosity, and tell us, did she scold for the confusion you caused at her dinner?"

"Nero's cruelty was nothing to yours! Reminding me of that *démele*, and the long harangue I endured during our drive home. It is worse, a thousand times worse. Positively, the wretch has been telling every one that 'her son John had some thoughts of you at one time, but she was happy to say he soon gave them up; such a daughter-in-law would not have suited her at all!' I am only glad I heard her. I vouched for having seen John on his knees once, and report said twice; and I assured her that no one out of Bedlam could believe her tale. If she does not deserve burking, I know not who does. I only hope I have put you in such a passion, that you will forbid her your house."

"For shame, Alford! How can you say such things? and where is the delicacy you boast of preserving in all that concerns me? Why not let the remark pass unnoticed?"

"Unnoticed! and let the world suppose that dolt had denied you? Since you are not proud for yourself, your friends must be proud for you. But this is not the whole;" and he whispered. "She had the insolence to say, 'Some people think that Miss Grey pretty,

but I say she is like a blighted snow-drop, that has come out a month too soon.’”

“Ha! now the murder is out.”

“For shame!” said Alford, avoiding her arch look; “when I am ever ready to be your defender; but even this is not all;” and he spoke aloud. “She declares to every one that the Mahons are trying to catch her son John, as a last resource, for they are entirely ruined, and bailiffs in the house.”

“Impossible! Mrs. Mahon looks as calm as ever.”

“Oh, poor dear Mrs. Mahon!” exclaimed Mrs. Jones, approaching, “Have not you heard? So shocking!” And she began her tale with all the delight of a thorough gossip at finding an ignorant listener. “Only think. Mr. Mahon had the imprudence to place all his money in the hands of a friend, who was a banker, and now he has failed and run away. Only think how dreadful! And they say besides, that, somehow or other, his name was in the bank; and so the creditors have seized on every thing. Shocking, that the father of a family should be so imprudent! And would you believe it? the bailiffs are in the house now, though she gives out he is ill; and moreover Mrs. Mahon went down on her knees to the bailiffs, to let her and her daughters have

their ball dresses and come to the ball ; and one of them is here dressed as a footman ; and she has brought Miss Elizabeth as well as Miss Caroline, in hopes some one will take them off her hands, and she is trying all she can to catch Mr. De Roos and Mr. John Carleton ; and she won't let her daughters tell any thing about it, just as if we did not know ! Shocking thing, indeed ! And only think, they say Mr. Wilder has been playing in town, and lost forty thousand pounds, and his wife's jewels. Is it not dreadful ?”

“Dreadful indeed, if true ;” said Helen, as Mrs. Jones stopped for an instant to take breath, not having ventured to pause before, lest some one should forestall her story.

“Oh, it is all quite true, I assure you.”

“How can you know that ?”

“Well now, I'll tell you,” said the gossip, looking important, coming close up to her, and speaking in a confidential manner. “My maid's sister lives housemaid with Mrs. Mahon ; and as I had heard from a friend something odd about two strange men, I sent Jane over, just as if she went to see her sister, you know, that she might learn all about it. I would have gone myself, but then they might have said, ‘Not at home ;’ and I thought she would learn more from the servants. And so she did ; for

she asked one of the bailiffs himself, and he told her all about it; and I was the first who knew it; for no one suspected any thing till I told them. I hear he is to go to gaol to-morrow, and that she will have nothing but her settlement, which is only one hundred a-year.

“Is it possible,” said Helen, indignantly, “that you could be mean enough to send your servant to pry into the sorrows of the unfortunate, for the pleasure of detailing them to the world? For your own sake spread the report no further. The person who delights in spreading evil tales, and attributing evil motives, should be shunned by all as a pest.”

“I am sure—I am very sorry,” stammered forth the half petrified gossip, “I had not the slightest intention of offending you.”

“You have not offended me, but you have shown yourself a mischievous tale-bearer;” and Helen walked to the other end of the conservatory.

“Now do, my lord, persuade Miss St. Maur to forgive me. I am sure I would not vex her for the world.”

Her terror lest she should be denied the *entrée* at Hurlestone, and Helen’s indignation, so rarely excited, caused some merriment to the young lord, a merriment he seemed inclined to prolong; for, putting on a grave air, he said,

“Indeed! I don’t know what to say, Miss St. Maur looks very angry, and I am afraid to venture. Do you know of nothing to propitiate her?”

“Yes! yes!” cried she joyfully after a moment’s pause. “If she will but listen to me, I know something that it will please her to hear.”

“I will ensure you a hearing then,” said the laughter-loving young man, curious to hear what she could have to say.

Helen turned round as they approached, but before she could do more than look a question, Mrs. Jones began with her former breathless and uninterruptible haste, and with the assured manner of one certain of a favourable reception for her intelligence:

“Oh, Miss St. Maur! that Mr. Elliott is in the army, and is a great man in disguise, and his name is not Elliott; and I can tell you all about him. I heard Lady Catherine Alford call him Urser Major, and then all the people laughed at her mistake, because she did not call him Major Urser. Well, I wanted to know more, and so I just asked Mr. Dalton what regiment he belonged to; and, for once, he answered civilly, and seemed to know all about him, for he said he was connected with the staff of one of the Polish regiments; and when I asked if he had a very high situation, he said a most exalted one indeed, higher than was held

by any one in the county; and yet there are three dukes and the lord lieutenant, in the county, and ever so many lords and generals. But I dare say you guessed this, you were so civil to him. Only think how condescending he must be! And so unfortunate! Susy gave him to understand she would not dance with him, and perhaps he might have taken a fancy to her. I wish I could see him to say how sorry she was."

"Have then your wish!" cried the laughing Alford dragging forward Elliott from behind a shrub. "Come Elliott, come! and enact the part of staff officer in one of the Polish regiments. Whose staff did you say?" questioning the embarrassed Mrs. Jones, who was favouring the newly-discovered *exalté* with curtsy upon curtsy.

"The Earl of Leicester's, I think Mr. Dalton said."

Alford's laugh was louder than before, and even Helen and Miss Grey could not repress their smiles, so ludicrous were the lady's humility and mistakes; but the former checked herself instantly, and without glancing at Elliott, for fear of increasing his mortification, was on the point of putting an end to the scene, when he prevented her by joining in the laugh, and telling her he had acquired more self-possession than when they first met.

Taking courage from his good humour, without ceasing her curtsies, Mrs. Jones poured forth her apologies, assuring him of her daughter's readiness to dance with him, amid the renewed laughter of the gentlemen, and the smiles of the ladies.

"I am sorry you should have had so much trouble in apologizing," said Elliott at length, when she paused for an instant, "I assure you I hold no exalted station, and Mr. Dalton must have been seeking his own amusement, when he told you so."

"Now do tell me, my lord, is this really true?" inquired she earnestly, completely mystified; "or does not he like to have it known?"

A glance from Helen made Alford answer fairly for once.

"It is true, and you had better go to Mr. Dalton. Tell him we have had a good laugh, and that he must set you right. Always suspect him when civil."

"And for the future be less inclined to believe and relate," added Helen, in a tone that, though low and gentle, convinced the gossip her acquaintance with the heiress stood on rather a perilous footing. "We ought to apologize to you, Mr. Elliott," said Helen. "Alford forgot in Mrs. Jones's folly how much mischief her tattle may make."

“ I need no apology, and was as much entertained as the rest of the party. Habit, and the delightful certainty that there are still some interested in my fate, will, in time I trust, make me a perfect hero in society, though I must expect a relapse or two.”

“ For my part,” said Alford, “ I consider it quite a treat to see Helen in a passion, and had been trying at it all the evening in vain.”

“ How can you treat so lightly her conduct towards the unfortunate? but I believe I am in the wrong; a gossip will be a gossip as long as she meets encouragement. Is what she said true?”

“ I fear part of her intelligence is correct, but I will learn if I can. As to Miss Mason, the quadrille had begun, so I dance with her the next, and come back to claim my reward. Miss Grey takes my other arm in to supper, and dances with me the one after, and you form one of my party, and honour me with your hand the second. No remonstrance! 'tis the fashion to-night to dance twice with those we like;” and leading Miss Grey to a seat, he took one beside her, and soon engaged all her attention.

CHAPTER VII.

“ I lived an unloved, solitary thing.”

KIRKE WHITE.

“ The beings of the mind are not of clay.

Essentially immortal, they create
And multiply in us a brighter ray
And more beloved existence ; that which fate
Prohibits to dull life, in this our state
Of mortal bondage, by these spirits supplied,
First exiles, then replaces what we hate,
Watering the heart whose early flowers have died,
And with a fresher growth replenishing the void.

Yet there are things whose strong reality
Outshines our fairy land ; in shape and hues
More beautiful than our fantastic sky.”

BYRON.

As the conservatory was cool, sufficiently filled to make none particular, yet sufficiently empty to allow conversation without being overheard by your next neighbour, Helen preferred it to the ball-room.

“My womanly feelings will not permit me to understand the rapture and intoxication of gaming,” remarked our heroine to Elliott, after hearing part of the report concerning Mr. Wilder confirmed in sorrow by a relative. “I can comprehend the *enivrement* of the hero and the statesman,—the thrill of glory and ambition, even unhallowed by nobler motives, than man’s applause; nay, I can feel some sympathy for the exciting bustle of a man of business; but that a man of talent, an affectionate father and husband, should risk his all upon a die, feel no remorse at ruining all loved by himself or another, is something too sublime, I suppose I must say, for my weak understanding to grapple with.”

“I should have said the same in my days of youth and innocence, but I have felt there are times when such excitement, despicable as it is, can charm even to intoxication; and never can I be sufficiently thankful for not having met with even a shadow of ill fortune. It is only in evil hour such things can charm, when the impatience of youth, and a habit of discontent and murmuring urged us on to snatch from fortune what we should seek humbly and patiently from Providence. Yet some have not even the poor excuse of want.”

“ Am I to believe you a gambler, then ? ” she inquired earnestly—what De Roos had said recurring to her mind. “ Your speech favours the Manichean doctrine ; a good and evil spirit seem to hold equal sway ; for whilst you condemn the act, you rejoice in reaping its fruits. How could you, with your opinions, play at all ? ”

“ Do we never act contrary to our better judgment ? I fear I have forfeited your good opinion by the confession ; yet was it a solitary error, with some rather palliating circumstances, and deeply deplored ; but the tale is long and sad ; and I hope and trust I have enacted the gambler for the last time.”

“ ‘ You must read me this riddle,
And tell me this tale.’ ”

—I owe half my popularity to being a good listener.”

“ But the tale concerns myself, and has too little event to be interesting.”

“ That excuse will not hold good in these days of autobiographies, when the romances of chivalry, with their fays and their marvels, and their deeds of gallantry, have yielded place to the sometimes monstrously lengthened chain of thoughts and feelings. I can take no denial, for I have as much curiosity as Mrs. Jones, to know all about you. Remember, all auto-

biographers are wonderful children, marvellous boys, and extraordinary men—thinking before others possess the power of thought, and describing their feelings before they could distinguish ‘a hawk from a handsaw.’”

“Then my autobiography will be perfectly original,” he said, answering her bright smile with one almost as bright, “for I can boast of nothing wonderful, marvellous, or extraordinary. I have only felt as others would have felt in my situation, and have such a horror of playing the egotist, that I shall deny all knowledge of my past life.”

“No! no! no!” with a playful shake of the head. “Courage! *ce n’est que le premier pas qui coute*. I am dying with curiosity, and must hear every thing, ay, from the very beginning.”

“Well, then! Once upon a time, a raw simple youth came up to town.”

She shook her head.

“You do not like this commencement? You are fastidious; and if you do not let me tell my story in my own way, I shall never be able to tell it at all. Once more, you must imagine me a little boy between four and five years of age, with bright curling locks, laughing eyes, and ’witching dimples; in short, a perfect picture—a subject for Lawrence—a Cupid in beauty and archness. Will that do?”

She nodded a laughing assent, and he continued with a countenance changing its expression every moment—now saddened by melancholy—now glowing with animated hope. Nor were the words and thoughts that occasioned these changes, less rapid than the changes themselves. There was no pause, no seeking for words, no studied antithesis. It was the cataract of a noble mind, pouring forth its waters from its own bright impulse. The lightening of a pent up heart, to one of kindred mould.

“ I was half sitting, half reclining in a lady’s lap, twining my fingers in her rich bright curls, that rested on my cheek as she bent over me. She looked down upon my laughing face, and, child as I was, I felt there was something painful in her smile as she returned my caress. She would have raised her head, but I bent it down with one arm round her neck, whilst the other hand twisted flowers in her long rich hair. When my flowers were exhausted, I let her go, that I might look at her. ‘ Now beautiful, mamma ;’ I said ‘ beautiful,’ and she repeated the word in such a tone—it lingers on my memory still. ‘ Does not every body love what is beautiful, mamma ? Nurse says so !’ ‘ Love, child ! no one loves me now !’ ‘ Yes, mamma, I do, and nurse does,

and Carlo does.' She tried to smile—she could not; but she clasped me to her heart with a wild pressure that almost made me shrink. 'Yes! yes!' she exclaimed, 'you alone are left me, and you I must leave. No father! no mother! Heaven shield my child!' and then she bent over me, kissing my brow, my lips, my cheeks, with all a mother's passionate fondness. Tears mingling with her caresses, I had been used to; but there was a solemnity in her manner at that moment, that made me submit in silence, and without return. Once more she bent over me, kissed my forehead, murmured 'Bless you, my child!' and then leant back in the high chair in which she was sitting.

"It was a bright summer's day; the sun was shining full into the little room, and there were gay flowers without, and bees and birds and butterflies. My mother's eyes were not closed, yet I thought she slept; so I sat quite still, looking out upon the gay insects, and gayer flowers. It was my first effort at self-denial, for I longed to be out chasing those butterflies, and picking those flowers. I was tolerably quiet for some time, hoping my mother would waken, and when she did not, I became impatient. The flowers began to close, the bees became less numerous, and I grew

more impatient still. I looked again at my mother; the bright blossoms I had twined in her hair were drooping and withering. I kissed her hand; it was cold, and her cheek was very, very pale; but then it was always so. I called mamma; there was no answer. I lost all patience: I climbed up, clasped my little arms round her neck, and pressed my lips to her's. I called her by every endearing name, and listened for an answer, but none came; my caresses grew more ardent, but they met with no return. In a passion of love, fear, and anger, I became more violent. The pale thin face fell forward, and the cold, cold cheek rested on my shoulder! Its chilling touch has never been forgotten.

"I did not move, but I believe I screamed, for nurse entered suddenly, uttered an exclamation of terror, replaced the drooping head, and took me from the room. There was a great confusion in the house; the hasty tramp of horses' feet—strange people came and went—and they said I could not see my mother. My passion at the refusal became dangerous to myself; and a stranger taking me by the hand, led me into a darkened chamber. There were strange black things upon the bed, and a something low and long raised from the floor. He led me towards it, took me in his arms, and I looked down

upon my mother, little altered, for she was scarcely paler than in life. Awe at the strange sights I saw, had hushed my cries and tears as I entered the room; but when I looked down upon my mother, with a wild scream of joy, I sprang from the stranger's arms, and clung around her. The fearful chill of that embrace—the thought even now can freeze the current of my blood!—and in moments of desolation it claims an early victim for the tomb. Why slept not the babe with its mother?

“I have been since told that the fever produced by my passion, and the shock of that embrace, caused me a long and dangerous illness, the weakness attendant on which left me for weeks too much exhausted to observe or inquire.

“What I recollect next was, saying I wanted to go home, I did not like where I was; and above all I wanted mamma, and nurse, and Carlo. Then came all the stories they tell to children about being put in the pit-hole, and if good I should see them again in heaven. Carlo they brought me. I did not believe them. What does a child comprehend of death? and I ran away to seek my mother. My attendant brought me back, and again assured me she was in heaven—in the sky. I looked up there hour after hour, day after day, till the white

clouds of the summer sky of snowy whiteness, or tinged with the setting sun, and the pale evening star, became associated with her memory—they are so still; and often a sweet pale lady came to me in my dreams, fanning me with silver wings, or breathing kisses on my brow. She seemed the only one who loved me. These childish fancies would, doubtless, have soon passed away, if fondness from others, or any event worth remarking, had occurred to obliterate them. But there was no such event, and no such fondness. My new nurse was harsh and stupid; and my tutor, or protector, or whatever he might be, with whom I resided, was learned and attentive, but never affectionate. I learned with facility, because I liked learning; I obeyed, because there was no reason for disobedience; but I never did, I never could love Mr. Stanton.

“In after years I inquired for my parents. They had married contrary to the wishes of the relations of both, and those relations had thrown them off. My father had been in the army, and died in America. My mother had not lingered long, and Lord Fitzallan, as a friend of the former, took charge of me. I saw him twice; but he loved my father too much or too little for my presence to give him pleasure. I pleaded to visit my mother’s grave. Mr.

Stanton was deaf to my entreaties ; he could not, or would not tell me where it was. I had but three treasures on earth. On the day of my mother's death she had allowed me to take from her neck, and hang round my own, a large locket, which I had been permitted to retain. I had also a lock of her hair, and these two things are never separated from me. Then I had Carlo : dear, dear, Carlo ! how I loved him. He was a large handsome spaniel, who scarcely ever left me. You would smile if I should tell you how I doted on these things, but I had nothing else to love. In time poor Carlo died — believe he had honourable burial, with as elegant a tomb as I could make him, and for his sake I had no second favourite. Mr. Stanton shunned society, and my life was lonely in the extreme. I could not live without something to love, so I made a garden, and planted flowers, and reared birds and beasts, and every living thing I could get, sometimes to Mr. Stanton's annoyance, for my favourites were not always as quiet as they might have been ; and he once said he might as well have lived in Noah's ark. I made friends too with the farmers and cottagers round, and for a time was tolerably happy ; but I believe some of my happiness arose from believing myself a prodigy in learning, not knowing any to compare with me. I

am convinced too much that solitude engenders pride and self-will. Mr. Stanton took me to a neighbouring town, and my dream of happiness fled. I saw boys at cricket; I would have joined them, but Mr. Stanton forbade it. They had friends and companions. There was the jest, the laugh, the light retort; but I had neither friends or companions—these things were not for me. I tried to console myself by thinking I was their superior in learning; but I overheard a conversation which obliged me to confess my own inferiority. I passed a beautiful cottage, with such a garden before as I thought I remembered in my childhood. There was a window looking into that garden, and a fair pale lady sitting at it. A carriage stopped at the gate, and a boy sprang out. That pale lady rushed from the house, saying, ‘My child! my child!’ The feelings of my early years returned. I fancied it was my own sweet mother, and I sprang forward, calling on her. ‘Fool!’ cried Mr. Stanton, ‘you have no mother;’ seizing my arm as he spoke. I struggled; but the boy who had left the carriage passed me, and was clasped in that lady’s arms. Then—then, indeed, I felt I had no mother.

“I left that town a different creature to what I had entered it. The sadness of that day—the loneliness of that night! My garden was neglected, and the flowers withered and died.

The caresses of my favourites were coldly received—almost repulsed. What were flowers and birds, to mothers and friends? I had before but suspected my lonely state, but now I knew it. That town was hateful, and nothing could ever induce me to enter it again. I grew silent and sad, cherishing my sorrow, till even Mr. Stanton perceived and questioned me; when my hoarded grief burst forth with a violence that alarmed him. He relaxed something from his coldness, and even allowed me to play with some boys of my own age, residing a few miles distant. But my dreary solitude had done its work. Never was being less able to bear, less calculated to win; and I might have been a gloomy misanthrope for life, but for a new inmate of our village.

“ You will smile at the simple epochs of my life; but my acquaintance with Mrs. Dawson was a new era in my existence. She was a widow lady, about forty-five, with no one thing remarkable about her, but the sunny brightness of her humour. With her it was always summer; every thing was for the best. There might be wicked people in the world, but she had never met with them. She traced some good from every misfortune, and saw a blessing in every sorrow. Her name would have furnished one of the three happy persons, whose existence would have restored

the dead queen to her sorrowing husband. Yet was she neither rich, nor handsome, nor highly born; her happiness was the happiness of the mind, and not of circumstance. There are many Christians of higher intellectual attainments, but never was there one possessed of more humility, cheerfulness, and charity. I verily believe she loved every body and every thing; at least I am sure she loved me, and never can I feel sufficient gratitude for her kindness. Wise precepts I should have rejected with a proud heart; her loving example I could not withstand. Poor Mrs. Dawson! her death left me almost as lonely as before; but, thanks to her example, better fitted to bear. It was from her I learnt to feel I had blessings for which to be thankful. Her love taught me to forget I was an isolated being. She made me sing with her; she procured me books; she opened to my mind a new career; she talked to me of kindness she had received, till I learnt to believe the world a paradise, and all its inhabitants as good as herself. I studied French under her instruction, though no very scientific teacher, and then other languages, without any instruction. This was a new and absorbing pursuit, that enchained every faculty for a time. There are difficulties in acquiring a language without an instructor, which it flat-

tered my pride to overcome ; besides, the works in these new tongues furnished me with new ideas, and an active mind must live upon actions, ideas, or itself. My solitude forbade the former ; and I was glad to devote myself to the second, to avoid the latter. I should be ashamed to tell the strange collection of works of every description I perused about this time. The acquiring knowledge, the developement of thought, became a passion ; and it would have been better for me if I had had a clever and judicious counsellor, as well as a kind purveyor for my craving literary appetite. Again did happiness appear within my grasp ; my spirits became light and buoyant ; the world again looked bright before me ; the cold sternness of reality had passed away, replaced by the dazzling brilliancy of fancy : some of those fairy dreams are lingering still. The reading in which I had indulged had given a romantic turn to my ideas and principles, which, with a weak judgment, or a less judicious friend than I met with afterwards, might have been dangerous to one nurtured in solitude and ignorance of his fellow man, though in general romance is at the worst but a lovely dream, as brief as brilliant ; and I doubt if any but the thoroughly cold and heartless have been quite proof against its beautiful witchery. I cer-

tainly was at that time like the mortal dwelling in elfin abodes ; my eyes had not been anointed, and I saw gold and jewels, where the better initiated saw only tinsel and coloured glass. If Don Quixote were really intended to have the moral Sismondi supposes, I abhorred it ; and the high estimation in which the book is held by the cold and selfish must prove its uselessness ; and that in these worldly days, at least, there is no chance of romance rivalling ancient Rome in the extent of her dominion.

“After the death of Mrs. Dawson I might have relapsed into my former misanthropy, had I not formed a new friendship almost immediately with a young clergyman just come into the neighbourhood, a younger son, who found himself, on the death of his father and elder brother, left with only four thousand pounds, the gift of an aunt, and the debts of his deceased relations amounting to nearly that sum. He never hesitated a moment : the debts were discharged, and he lived on his curacy. I suspect another circumstance rendered this loss doubly distressing, but he always shrank from the subject. His kindness was unremitting, his precepts invaluable. To him and Mrs. Dawson shall I be indebted for every thing of good in my after life. His was cheerful resignation and pious hope. He

sought to moderate, not destroy, my imagination; showed what the world really was, and should be, in the eyes of a Christian; and convinced me of the necessity of doing, as well as dreaming what was right. I wished to enter into some profession; and, influenced by the heroic tales I had loved in my childhood, I would have entered the army—it was denied to my wishes. I would then have studied the law, and again applied to Mr. Stanton and Lord Fitzallan. I was refused, with a taunt at my discontent. I would have rebelled; they were not my parents. I would have passed forth into the world, and wrought out renown by the force of my own will; for the bright visions of Mrs. Dawson had not quite faded before the more sober pictures of my later friend; but they showed me a paper in my mother's writing, consigning me to Lord Fitzallan's care, and bidding me show him obedience. I submitted, but the shaft rankled in my bosom, and my health declined. I was permitted to undertake a tour; and with a letter of introduction to some relations of my new friend, I started for a midland county.

“There were many things in this tour to recall the memory of my misery at that visit to the town of ——. Again was the contrast of the orphan and the darling child, forced upon my

heart, but the wound was less deep, or more skilfully leeches. There is no sorrow like a first sorrow. The family to whom I was introduced, was a happy and united one. The symptoms of misanthropy attacked me then, as they will probably do again, and the contrast of their happiness to my desolation, was at first almost agony; but either from my friend, or their own kindness, they guessed at my thoughts, and one and all vied with each other in striving to make me believe myself an object of regard. The dance, the song, the game—I was courted for all—they would make no party without me. If I sought a solitary walk, in which to brood, I soon heard a light footstep beside me, the eyes of a gay and happy child were looking up into my face, the little fingers were twined in mine, and the lisping tongue lured me to seek for flowers or berries. But I shall weary you. You, who must be loved by all, cannot tell what love was to me. Even the loving kiss of some little child was to me a blessing to be remembered; it brought the certainty that I was not quite an outcast. My heart still clings to those ‘Green spots on memory’s waste.’ They too have suffered, and strangers are now in their once happy home! I returned improved in health and spirits, and from that time wandered almost at my will,

with my petted Bavrica, who was to me all that his namesake was to the gallant Cid; brought up, as he had been, on my plan of ruling by love, not fear.

“During one excursion, I came unexpectedly on a romantic cottage, with a small, but lovely garden. Could it be that I had ever seen it before, or had I dreamt of such an one? Might it be—was it—the one whose memory I had cherished from childhood? I sprang forward almost expecting to see my own sweet mother, such as I had pictured her to myself, tall, pale, and beautiful, almost beyond even woman’s beauty. There was no lady there, but I looked into the little room, and memory grew more distinct. An elderly woman came to the door. ‘Who lives here?’ I asked. ‘Mrs. Smith.’ I turned away in disappointment, but the old lady was garrulous, and began a list of the former occupants. I listened in breathless expectation, drinking in every name, yet without the slightest remembrance of it a moment after, till she uttered the name of Elliott. I questioned her, and she told of a sad but beautiful lady of that name, who had come a stranger to the village some nineteen years before, with an old nurse, and a young child. ‘Where is she?’ I exclaimed, the wild thought that she might still live coming across me. ‘There!’ and the

woman pointed to the spire of a church rising above the trees. Wild as had been the thought, its destruction was a shock—I was, for a brief space, motionless,—then springing over the fence, was in the church-yard in a few minutes.

“There was one tomb very simple, but with more of elegance than the others, and there was a humbler one at its foot—I needed no guide—it was my mother’s grave! It told nothing more, save that there rested Cecil Elliott, aged twenty-three, with the date of the day, and year of her decease; and that more humble grave at its foot was the abiding place of my old nurse, Janet Douglass.

“I made inquiries, but could learn little. In upwards of nineteen years there had been deaths, and removals, and the loss of memory. The clergyman, the sexton, and the clerk, were dead. Some few remembered the lady’s coming, but none knew from whence. More remembered her funeral, for it seemed to have been conducted with some pomp, and had been a splendid novelty in the simple village. They spoke of a noble-looking stranger who had attended, and sorrowed much. A Lord, or a General, or something very grand—a name beginning with an F. ‘Was it Fitzallan?’ ‘Yes!’

“I lingered some time—there was something

to which I could claim kindred, though it was but dust; and then I returned. I again questioned Mr. Stanton, and spoke of my mother's grave. He looked confused, but would tell me nothing; and, after a violent altercation, I wrote to Lord Fitzallan, claiming a knowledge of my family, and declaring I would no longer remain in idleness. I believe the letter was rather imperious; but I was in that state wherein I would be dallied with no longer. Time passed—no answer came—I glanced by chance at a paper—a name caught my eye—I looked more intently. Lord Fitzallan had died suddenly a few days before, and whether he received my letter I know not.

“Was I ever thus to be the sport of fortune? I hurried home—I told Mr. Stanton. Never shall I forget his look of horror! He was fearfully agitated, and repeated continually! ‘Lord Fitzallan died suddenly!’ His agitation at length subsided, but he continued silent to all my entreaties, and the next morning I found he had departed, on business as *he* wrote; to avoid my questions, as *I* thought.

“I wrote to the present Lord Fitzallan, stating my situation, and requesting to know if he could furnish me with any intelligence concerning my family, or future prospects. After some time I had a kind reply, saying, that his late

brother on his death-bed, without saying more about me, had recommended me to his care, and desired him to present me one hundred pounds, and that, though unfortunately not possessed of much interest, yet as I wished to enter the army, he would do his utmost to procure me a cadetship. Time passed, and I heard no more. My impatience began to change into despair, for the dislike of an inactive life increased daily; the burning thirst for action fevered every thought. Had I known more of the world, or had I suspected De Roos to have been his son, I had hoped less, and been less disappointed.

“I had been spending a few days with my friend, when I was suddenly summoned to attend Mr. Stanton. He had been most anxiously expecting my arrival, but a paralytic stroke had rendered him nearly unintelligible. Immediately on my entering, he put a paper into my hands, in which he made over to me the sum of three thousand pounds, due to him from Lord Fitzallan. He appeared disappointed at the little thankfulness I expressed, and asked in a strange altered tone, ‘if it were not enough?’ ‘Enough, for what?’ I exclaimed; ‘take it back, if you mean it should bribe me to silence,’ and flung it from me. I implored him passionately to tell me something

of my parents—only to reveal to me one person with whom I might claim kindred, and the blessing of the orphan should be upon his head. ‘Curse me not! Curse me not!’ he exclaimed vehemently, and I will tell you all I dare. His voice became so thick, that though he spoke for some time, and though all my senses were quickened by the intensity of my interest, I could distinguish nothing but ‘Fitzallan—your mother—claims on him—demand them—and persist’—pointing to the paper—‘go not to India.’ His agony was so great at not being understood, that I had not the cruelty to question him further then, but promised to claim the three thousand pounds, and, to quiet him still more—not to go to India, and he fell asleep with my hand in his.

“His dreams or his agony must have been dreadful, for the cold dew stood on his forehead, and his groans were fearful. At length with a wild scream, he started from his sleep, stared round the apartment, as if expecting to behold some horrible object, and then recognising me, threw his arms about my neck, exclaiming: ‘Save me! save me, Elliot! forgive me!’ I promised forgiveness, though I knew not for what, and tried to sooth him, but it was all in vain; the more kindly and gently I spoke, the more violent became his distress; and the

surgeon, who was present, advised silence. He spoke, but we could not understand—he tried to write—but his fingers could not guide the pen—his agony increased at the failure; he made a violent effort, and spoke more plainly. ‘Tell Lord Fitzallan a death-bed is a fearful thing to a sinful man—a wicked oath awful to keep, or break. Tell him the curse of the dying and the dead; the wife, the orphan, be upon him if he refuse your rights.’ Then came some unintelligible words, and after those silence. The suspense was agony. He was quiet for a few minutes; then clinging more wildly to me, he whispered in my ear, in an unearthly voice, ‘Bid her go! and I will tell you all.—Your mother was ——!’ he paused. ‘Who? who? in mercy tell me?’ He tried to answer—his features were dreadfully convulsed—there was a deep groan—a rattle in the throat—a clenching of the hands—and the ghastly face rested on my shoulder. It seemed the dead were ever to rest on me!

“There had been something to tell; and it had not been told. Perhaps the only clue that might have developed my fate was broken!

“I wrote to Lord Fitzallan, claiming the three thousand pounds, and receiving no answer, set off for town. It was during this journey I had the pleasure to be of service to

Mr. Hopkins, and to make a friend of one of the noblest of beings. His mother nursed me as her own son, during the long illness that succeeded, for it was three months before I could mount Bavnica, and proceed on my errand.

“ My tale has already been so unconscionably long, that I will say nothing of my Whittingtonian dreams; nor do I feel sufficient regard for De Roos or for his father, to trust myself to dwell on their conduct. They may be in the right, at least I have no proof against them. His Lordship received me with politeness, and his manners are at times as fascinating as his son’s. I spoke of Mr. Stanton’s claim. My letter had never been received, and he thought there must be some mistake, for he recollected nothing of the transaction. What proof could I produce? I showed the paper; it was only signed Fitzallan, without any date. ‘ It was no signature of his, though like his writing; it might refer to his brother, and he would consult his lawyer; in the mean time I must remain with him; he would exert all his interest; and though really very poor, pay the money on his lawyer’s opinion.’ He seemed all kindness, but I was hurt to find myself slighted by his visitors.

“ The poor and unhappy are too sensitive. I knew, from overheard remarks, that I was hideous

and awkward; still I fancied there must be something more. My illness had left me weak and irritable, and I felt more than I should like to own, on finding I was considered as a fawning dependant. The gloomy feelings of my early youth returned, and I wavered between desperation and sulkiness. I would have left Lord Fitzallan instantly, but he soothed me with so much apparent kindness, that, completely won, I promised to remain with him, and apply to no one else till he had his lawyer's final opinion. He then questioned me as to possessing further papers concerning the bond, and hearing I had none, he shook his head, and said the lawyer declared the deed invalid. To believe that, at such an awful moment, Mr. Stanton could have uttered a falsehood, and that for the purpose of enriching one whom he had never loved, seemed worse than folly; and I repeated all that the dying man had said. He appeared much moved, and promised further inquiries should be made. Why he chose to keep me with him, I know not; and there are other parts of his conduct beyond my comprehension. A more than usually pointed slight, and the overheard remarks of a young lordling, too cruel not to wound, yet too general to excuse my demanding an apology,

had on that day stung me nearly to madness. Lord Fitzallan saw this, exerted his powers of fascination to charm away the evil spirit, as he called it, insisted on my drinking more wine than customary, and accompanying him in the evening.

“ With an aching head and heart, and burning brow, I followed him, and, for the first time, entered a gaming-house. I took a seat beside him, thinking little of the game, or the objects around me. I thought of the past, I thought of the future; and my boyish predilection for the heroic returned. I was unknown, poor, friendless; but, despite all his kindness, I could never rely implicitly on Lord Fitzallan. If I could win fame and fortune, those who now shunned would court me. I should, at least, have the semblance of regard, and the pride of my spirit was bowed till it could prize even a semblance. If I fell, there was not one to mourn, not one to grieve. A dispute on the affairs of Greece, carried on near me, disturbed my reverie, but only to give it object and action. Greece! the land of heroes and of sages! the noble and the free! the polished and the brave! Was she to bend for ever beneath the Moslem’s yoke? True, she had been for ages a scorn and a bye-word to others more fortunate,

not more deserving than herself. But was she, slave-like, ever to crouch beneath the tyrant's lash? Were her children to be slaughtered without a murmur? Was the spirit of her ancient heroes fled for ever? No! swords had been girded on; arms had been raised. The Spirit of Liberty had spread her wings, and who should stay her flight? The cold might scoff, the worldly deride; the selfish and the calculating might aid her oppressor, to check a gigantic power, or preserve a visionary balance; but the noble and the good must pray for her success. The passionate longings of my childhood returned. Why might not I be a second, though a foreign Leonidas? At least she should have the aid of my arm, feeble as it was. Then came the remembrance that I was poor indeed! At that moment Lord Fitzallan touched my arm—‘Here, Elliott! try your luck,’ placing some notes before me! ‘Make no scruple; my winnings have been great. Should you succeed, you can pay me again; and if you lose, there is an end of it.’ I looked at him in surprise; his cheeks were flushed, his eye bright with triumph and delight; there was nothing to hint at the agonies of gaming; and I thought not of looking at his adversary.

“One hundred pounds were before me. Could

I double that, it would equip me for Greece. ‘Will you play with me?’ said a pale thin young man, in a hurried anxious tone. There was a fever in my brain, a passion in my mind. I paused not—I took no time for thought; but bowed my assent to the stranger’s wish. I did not even understand the game, and my playing was little short of madness. His Lordship explained the rules to me, and we began. Nothing could be more brilliant, more rapid than my success. I won all, against every chance, every calculation. My hundred pounds had gained two hundred more. What a sum! for one who had nothing, and who saw within his power the accomplishment of a strong desire. I had the prudence—I should say the selfishness—to wish to decline further play, but my antagonist proposed double or quits, and of course I could not refuse. Even then I felt little anxiety, my success had been too dazzling to permit me to doubt. We played, and the stake was mine. He gave me his note and left the room without speaking. Others urged me to play, but I was rich beyond my expectations. They praised my skill, and laughed at the doleful looks of my opponent; but I was not quite so intoxicated as to believe their flattery, or join in the laugh. Had my success been doubtful, or had I lost, the pride of conquering

fortune, or the desperation of despair might have made me a confirmed gambler. But I knew nothing of a gambler's hopes and fears, and the value of my success had not been increased by anxiety. I paid Lord Fitzallan his loan, and finding he meant to return, left the house alone, never, I hope, to enter it more. Have I not then cause to be thankful for my success?"

Helen looked grave at this appeal. She had listened to his story from his spirited manner of relation, and as shewing his character in a new light, with an interest too intense to allow her to interrupt him; but this conclusion was far from satisfactory. Such a termination might suit a common character, but she had fancied him a something more than that.

He saw her hesitation, and was hurt at it.

"I fear I have been hoping a too merciful judgment. Are you such a rigid censor? May not one solitary error be forgiven? May my circumstances plead no excuse? Will you not acquit me?"

"It is not for me to acquit or condemn, and the world—"

"But you judge not as the world," he said hastily; "and I have forfeited your esteem."

She was silent for a moment, then said, "you

see more than is. I only hesitate at the ungraciousness of owning disappointment. I quarrelled with your first commencement, and you gave me a second. Will you do the same if I quarrel with your conclusion?"

He penetrated her meaning instantly.

"You wrong me, Miss St. Maur," he said proudly, "I had hoped my sad tale, and what you have known of me, might have saved me from such suspicion; but a gambler has no right to claim a charitable judgement," he added more humbly.

"Forgive me," she said earnestly, "it was the very interest your tale excited, which made me dislike its conclusion. You must tell me all; this was understood before you began."

"Not quite all," he replied, his manner resuming its former *naïveté* and animation. "What passed further is connected with one more unfortunate than myself, and whose grief must be respected. Suffice it that none of the money remained with me."

"Quite sufficient to prove you as noble as I thought you; but not to satisfy my curiosity. Was there any thing of a quarrel?" and she looked at him inquiringly.

He started at her words, and then his eyes flashed upon her with such fire that she withdrew her gaze in confusion.

“Who spoke of a quarrel, Miss St. Maur?” he asked in a tone that showed it required some effort to keep it calm.

She had not expected the question, and thought to discover if De Roos could have spoken falsely. She feared to occasion a quarrel by giving up her authority. To falsehood she never stooped, and there was nothing left but the assertion of female dignity.

“You are a bold and free questioner, but we ladies hold ourselves excused from giving up a sister gossip. May be I dreamt it.”

“Your pardon, if too bold; but you are no gossip, and would scarcely dream of gambling quarrels. The report owns De Roos for its author. I can read his genius in the tale—his superlative talent of grafting the false on the true, till the wisdom of a Solomon could scarcely decide on their respective claims. He is daring as acute, or he durst not have breathed a word. May I ask when first you heard this? and what were the particulars?”

“Too much has already been said on the subject,” she replied, alarmed at his warmth; “I never mentioned Mr. De Roos, and in courtesy, as well as to prevent mistake, I claim your silence?”

“Be not alarmed! believe me your delicacy shall be respected, with more even than a

brother's care. Yet it is hard to know myself maligned without the power of defence. Under other circumstances, I would charge him with his perfidy in your presence. I suspect others have heard the same tale, with whom I should have no such scruple, but I cannot prove it. He would prejudice me in your eyes. Will you not then tell me what he said? that I may clear myself."

"I am no tale-bearer, and if I were, I simply heard there had been a quarrel."

"Then you shield the guilty, and deny the innocent the means of justification."

"You require no justification in my opinion; or could easily clear yourself by relating what really passed. There is nothing so very malignant in stating there was a quarrel."

"True! But there is a way of making a statement that insinuates guilt, and I read your looks but ill, if I wrong De Roos by the suspicion. Besides there was nothing that should have been called a quarrel; and how know I what other things he may have insinuated? Ha! my suspicions are correct," as he marked her changing cheek. "What said he more? Surely he never mentioned our former meetings, colouring them as he would wish? You are silent. Then it is so! De Roos shall find he may go too far! He shall retract the falsehood in your presence!"

"Is this your pledge of a few moments since?" asked Helen in alarm. Then added more calmly, "you have neither a right to question or interpret my silence; such conduct will make me regret my frankness to a stranger."

"A stranger! and no right to question! Then you condemn me unheard. I had hoped more from your generosity."

"And I far more calmness, considering your promise. Where are the proofs of my having condemned you unheard?"

"It is I only who have been unjust, and I blush for my violence. But can I believe you will always act thus generously?"

"Why not judge the future by the past?"

"Then you will never condemn me unheard, even though you should know the tale to be partly true, and see good cause to believe the remainder?"

"Why promises are awful things!" she said smiling; "and I seldom give them."

"Then I must still remain at the mercy of evil reporters!"

"No. Tell me all you may of this quarrel, which is no quarrel at all it seems; and of your former meetings with Mr. De Roos, and then you will have nothing to fear from any ugly tales hereafter."

“Of the quarrel you shall hear, since it is no longer a matter of delicacy, and you will, I am sure, pity as much as you condemn; but of my former meeting with De Roos, I cannot become the relater; at least the provocation must be still greater than it has been.”

“I understand,” interpreting his blush and hesitation; “and being convinced that I should hear the tale better told by any lips than yours, will show how a woman can for once control her curiosity. The cause is dismissed, and you quit the court in perfect innocence and honour. In gratitude, Mr. De Roos is to hear nothing of this matter; and you are to play the lamb, and not the lion.”

“I will play anything you desire if you will give me the promise I asked.”

“You would fain be despotic, and yet despotism is waning fast.”

“You promise then?”

She smiled, but was silent:

“She did not speak,
But then her very silence told consent,
More surely than her speech had done.”

She smiled again. “I never contradict, so now to your tale.”

Again one of those bright Etna looks was beaming on her, and he began:

“I left Lord Fitzallan in the room, and de-

scending the stairs, entered a long passage but dimly lit. A figure was leaning against a doorway a few paces before me. The light was too dull for me to distinguish clearly, but a deep breathing, and the attitude, convinced me the person was in pain. I hastened towards him, asked if he were ill, and offered assistance. He turned towards me, and never shall I forget his look of agony, the corpse-like cheek, the fiery eye, and the lip compressed till the blood had started beneath the teeth. It was my adversary!

“‘Am I ill?’ he exclaimed fiercely, as he recognised me. ‘Why should you ask?—it matters not to you. Or perhaps you may think I may die before my debt is paid, or you came to boast your skill. Oh, it was well and nobly done! Not a shilling left! You robbed me of the very last, and then you took my bond. My bond! Follow and see how well it shall be paid!’ and with a strange and mocking laugh, he rushed from the house before I could detain him. ‘Robbed!’ My passion rose at the word. Who had dared to apply such a term to me? And should I bear it patiently? I was not myself that night, and can never be sufficiently thankful that I was saved from deeper guilt. I rushed after him to demand an explanation,

but it was some moments before I could undo the door ; and when I passed into the open air, he whom I sought had disappeared, and a solitary watchman alone met my view. The night breeze blew upon my burning brow, and cooled the fever of my brain, whilst the holy calm of nature rebuked the fury of my passion, and better thoughts came over me. How should I dare to avenge a slighting word, when the Omnipotent bears so long in mercy with the deepest, darkest crimes? What had he said too? Could I deny the charge? I had neither sat down from idleness, nor amusement, nor excitement, nor absolute want; those poor excuses for a gambler. I had played for the express purpose of winning. My own heart condemned me. I loathed the money I had gained, and determined to restore it. I applied to the watchman for information, and followed a vague direction. After wandering for some time, I entered a gloomy court, and at the farthest extremity, nearly hid by the deep shadow of the houses, I beheld the figure of a man resting against the railing.

“But you are pale! It is indeed a sad tale; let me discontinue it.

“No! no! proceed! I should be more unworthy than I am of my many blessings, if I

could shrink from the misery of others. Tell me all, and command me if I can aid the unhappy."

He looked at her a moment in admiring silence, and then continued:

"Uncertain whether it was Mr. Walsh, I was doubting if to proceed, when something in his hand glittering in the moonshine, and an exclamation of despair, urged me forward. It was a pistol, and his finger was on the trigger as I dashed it to the ground. An instant more, and I had been too late. Thank heaven his blood rests not on my head! The force with which I dashed the fatal instrument from his hand made him stagger against the rails, but in a moment he recovered himself, and recognising me, sprang upon me with the fury of a madman. I cannot tell you how I soothed him, and made him believe in my friendly intentions; but before half an hour had passed, he was weeping like an infant on my shoulder, and blessing me for having saved him from self-destruction, though it was to bear more of misery than—new as I was to the world—I had even dreamt of. My solemn declaration never to use the money I had won, at length induced him to receive it back, and as I walked with him to his lodgings, I learnt his story. At the age of twenty, the supposed heir of a

doting uncle, he had married a portionless cousin, for, though but an ensign in a foot regiment, his liberal allowance made this no act of imprudence. His uncle seemed to love his Mary—who could do otherwise?—and for three years his happiness was almost perfect; but at that time his uncle died, leaving all his property except two hundred pounds, to his cook, whom he had secretly married. Thus was Mr. Walsh left with only two hundred pounds and the pay of a Lieutenant, to support a delicate wife, and an increasing family. For some time they struggled on tolerably, till he was reduced to half-pay.

“He came up to town to seek assistance from his friends: it was refused. His wife pined under the idea that his marriage had caused this misery; the children, now increased to five, were most of them unhealthy; he had a severe and expensive illness, and debts were unavoidably incurred. He had before borrowed money on his commission, and it was part of the sum arising from its sale, and that of their last comforts, for they had nothing but necessities left, which he had lost to me. It was not enough to pay his debts, and even if it had been, there was nothing but starvation before them. As he passed the gambling-house, he heard a gentleman vaunting of success. It

was a desperate hope—he entered. The hope proved fallacious—and he lost every thing.

“ Could the most confirmed gambler have heard him tell his tale of hope and fear, and agony; the gloom of despair; the fever of desperation; the horror of the moment of meditated murder—even such might have paused on his dark road to ruin.

“ ‘ Amid all my sorrows,’ he concluded, ‘ I have had the blessing never to hear reproach from the lip, or read it in the eye of my own angel wife : and yet at times her very love has been such agony, I would have changed it, if I could, for coldness or for censure ; and then the next moment I have clung to the idea of her unchilled affection, as to a recompense for every ill. You will not tell her of this evening ? ’ he said eagerly, though in confusion. ‘ It would alarm her, and I would not she should think ill of me.’

“ We turned into a dark and wretched court, and stood before a miserable habitation. He looked at the house, and then at me, and I believe the thought of introducing a stranger into such an abode, made him more than ever feel its wretchedness. But this was no time for shame or hesitation. There was a stir in the house, the faint cry of a child, and then the feeble voice of a woman pleading for pity.

“We rushed in, and the scene was painful beyond description. Four sickly-looking children were lying in one bed, without a curtain, or a head. The whole furniture of the room was in the same scanty proportion, half shown, and half concealed, by one poor and unsnuffed candle. Two stern-looking men were speaking in harsh accents, as we entered ; but what moved me most was a lovely female, worn almost to a shadow, sitting in a high-backed chair of the coarsest make, and with difficulty preventing herself from fainting, whilst every now and then, in the sweetest accents, she begged for a little time to be allowed her. The gentle entreaty was met by a refusal so harsh, that it required some strength to prevent the husband from felling the intruder to the earth. With the yielding of despair, to save his delicate wife and sickly children from having bed and chair taken from under them, he divided the money between his merciless creditors, and bade them begone ; and as the door closed after them he gave one melancholy look round the apartment, and then hid his face in his hands. ‘Henry, dear Henry!’ said his beautiful wife, throwing her arms round his neck. ‘I am quite happy now you are with me ; you were so long, love ! I feared some ill.’ He withdrew his hands as she spoke, looked into her face, and then folded

her in his arms. In the midst of all his misery the wealthiest, the proudest, might have envied him that woman's love! When I went the next day, I found even worse than I had expected. Mr. Walsh was in prison at the suit of the person who had lent money on his commission, and his wife and children were with him. I returned to Lord Fitzallan, and used every effort to persuade him to assist them.

“ ‘No; they might be impostors; I was too kind-hearted, too simple, and could easily be deceived; besides, he was poor, and had other uses for his money. He could inquire. He was particularly engaged.’ ‘Out of his winnings the night before.’ ‘Where were mine?’ I told him; he called me a simple enthusiast to my face—a foolish dolt behind my back. He then, as if yielding to my entreaty, offered me a small sum to venture that night, but only on that condition. I refused, and urged him to give up the practice, with all the ardour and simplicity of youth, when, in the dawn of life, receiving every impression with the force of novelty, it understands not the difference of a shade, but with its own bold and noble character, *trop prononcé* for after-life, claims from all the acquiescence, which it does not understand can be denied.

The man of the world was not to be moved by the arguments of a raw youth, and we parted in anger, for I suspected him of a wish to entangle me in a passion for gaming.

“ It was the first time such misery had come before my view, and I had not the power of relieving it. All I could do for Mr. Walsh I did. I applied to a relation, at his request, and received and took to him a small sum; but it was ungraciously given, and I fear he can expect no more.

“ Two days after this, Lord Fitzallan requested I would visit De Roos, as he was obliged to leave London on business, promising me shortly a definitive answer concerning Mr. Stanton’s bequest. Had I known that De Roos and myself had met before, which, from never having heard his name, I did not, nothing should have induced me to become his guest. Yet I must say, on my first arrival, a dislike less rooted than mine, must have yielded to his fascinating courtesy; but I believe, in the revulsion of disappointed expectations, I may be verging on suspicion. At present, I suspect the only point on which we agree is the wish of avoidance; and yet, by some strange chance, we are much together.”

“ Many thanks for your sad tale ! and think not I shall ever wrong you again,” said Helen, after she had turned away to conceal her tears. “ Have you heard no more of Mr. Walsh ? ”

“ I had a letter from him this morning. His creditor has relented, and he has left the prison ; but his small supply is nearly exhausted, his wife very delicate, and no means of future support. One who had received favours from his family in former days, has offered to admit him to a share of the profits of a mercantile concern, if he can procure three hundred pounds, and will take part of the trouble ; and he wrote to me, partly in compliance with my wish, and partly to ask if I thought the relative who had supplied the little before, would be likely to advance the money on his bond, for repayment when in his power. I fear the application will be vain, and yet I cannot bear to destroy this only hope.”

“ Have you told all this to Mr. De Roos ? He might assist him.”

“ I can owe De Roos no favour, even for another, and I could not brook that he should mock at Walsh’s gentle wife.”

“ Mock ! surely you judge him harshly ! ”

He looked for a moment intently at the eager questioner, before he replied—"I judge by the past."

Helen was silent for a while, for there was food for thought in the conduct of these two young men. Each hinted evil of the other, and each in a manner accordant with his different character. The one insinuated the accusation, with the careless ease of a man of the world, who had seen too much of guilt to hold it in such deep abhorrence as in the innocent days of childhood. The other seemed to pour forth his accusations, not by will, but by force; urged on by the indignation of a young unhacknied spirit. It was strange she should become the confidante of the ill opinion each held of the other! There was enough in this circumstance to interest, and make her desirous of reading the riddle; but she was too wise to make this desire apparent, and too prudent to increase the irritation between them.

A deep sigh roused her from her reverie; she looked, and met Elliott's intent gaze withdrawn instantly in confusion.

"I believe I have been rather oblivious," she said, with a smile, thinking his melancholy look arose from sympathy with Mr. Walsh.

"But, though silent in speech, I have been eloquent in thought. Mrs. Throgmorton would be vexed if her beautiful inkstand, with its elegant appurtenances, were not admired and employed. Suppose you write me the address of your friend, the young clergyman, as I keep a list of worthies;" and she placed a gold pen in his hand, and some embossed paper before him.

He wrote, and with some surprise, saw she did the same.

"Now for an exchange!" and she took his paper, and presented him with her's.

He read in delighted surprise; it was a request to a gentleman in town to pay the bearer five hundred pounds.

He tried to thank her, but the task was too difficult to be accomplished without stammering and hesitation.

"It is I should thank you, for affording me the means to make others happy. I never could resist a love-tale, and theirs seems true affection. But there are some conditions annexed to this gift; you must not mention it; and as Mr. Walsh must not spare means to restore health to his gentle wife, he must promise to call on the gentleman to whom this is addressed, should he require further assistance. Assure him he need fear neither question nor repulse."

“What sonnet is that?” inquired Alford, looking over the paper, and preventing further conversation.

“Psha! only a name. But come, or we shall lose this quadrille; I will lead Miss Grey to her chaperon, and then be ready.”

CHAPTER VIII.

Détruire l'amour, un moyen unmanquable est de jeter du ridicule sur l'objet qui l'inspire.

They prais'd thy diamond's lustre rare ;
Match'd with thine eyes I thought it faded.
They prais'd the pearls that bound thy hair ;
I only saw the locks they braided.
They talk'd of wealthy dower, and land,
And titles, of high birth the token ;
I thought of Lucy's heart and hand,
Nor knew the sense of what was spoken.
And yet, if ranked in fortune's roll,
I might have learn'd their choice unwise,
Who rate the dower above the soul,
And Lucy's diamonds o'er her eyes.

WALTER SCOTT.

As Mr. Elliott and his fair partner were making their way to the dancing-room, the following conversation reached their ears :

“If not engaged, Mr. De Roos, will you allow me to introduce you to my niece?”

"Nothing would have given me greater pleasure, my dear Mrs. Daniell, but I am unfortunately engaged several deep. Should I be free towards the end of the evening, I shall claim the pleasure."

The lady retired, perfectly satisfied with the answer, and sought a partner elsewhere.

"I wish, De Roos, you would teach me how to get out of a scrape as you do, without suspicion. I have been obliged to dance with two gawkies already," remarked a gentleman near ; "your nonchalance is inimitable."

"Practice and self-possession are every thing," replied De Roos, joining in the laugh his clever escape had occasioned.

"Mr. De Roos," said Mrs. Throgmorton, "you begged for the honour of my daughter's hand some time during the evening, and I have secured it for this dance."

The gentleman expressed his pleasure in animated terms; and led the lady to the quadrille.

Mr. Elliott caught Helen's look of contempt, and all his animation returned on the instant.

"How very lovely Miss St. Maur looks this evening, and how gracefully she dances."

"Yes! she puts me in mind of my horse Conqueror, that won at Newmarket. Now I think of it, you never saw him; suppose—"

“ Oh, I must go and speak to Mr. Daniell;” and away hurried the first speaker, muttering as he went. “ Miss St. Maur like his horse Conqueror! Not seen him! Why I spent two hours in the hot stable three days since.”

“ Who is that dancing with Miss St. Maur?” inquired Mr. Dalton of Alford; “ his is the animation of mind, rather than mere manner. Were I a young coxcomb, and like half the county, aspiring to her favour, I should tremble for my chance.”

“ La, Mr. Dalton,” said Miss Carleton, “ you always say such strange things! Why that’s only Mr. Elliott, a poor dependant on Mr. De Roos, and he is as ugly as sin; and Lady Catherine calls him Ursa Major.”

“ I pretend not to dispute your capacity to decide on the hideousness of sin,” replied the caustic gentleman; then, talking to himself, “ that must be the Major Urser of Mrs. Jones.”

“ The same,” said the laughing Alford; “ and he is anxious to thank you for the staff appointment.”

“ You are in no mood to-night to distrust the wisdom of grey heads,” with an emphasis on the word *grey*, and a glance towards a corner where a fair face was just visible behind an orange tree; “ so, take my word for it, that the young man has a mind for any station, however

exalted;" and the old gentleman turned away with a sly smile at all the confusion he had occasioned.

The supper table was loaded with every delicacy, in season and out of season, and amidst all assembled, no party could have been found more contented with themselves and their neighbours than that which Alford had insisted should be grouped together. Miss Mason was too delighted at having had such a pleasant partner, and being handed in to supper by a lord, to quarrel with his attentions to Miss Grey; who in her turn decided that a ball was no such disagreeable thing as she had imagined; whilst our heroine and her partner were each moment more pleased with the congeniality in thoughts and feelings, and the powers of mind each discovered in the other.

"A silver sixpence for your thoughts, Mr. De Roos," said Miss Carleton, who had, by dint of great manœuvring, procured a seat beside him. "I have spoken to you three times, and you have not given me an answer, but kept looking over towards that Mr. Elliott. Never mind if he should do anything awkward, you cannot help it, you know, and Miss St. Maur will not let people laugh at her *protégé*. She seems to have taken a great fancy to him, and Mr. Dalton thinks he stands a good chance."

Had the young lady sought revenge for his inattention, no malice could have instructed her better; and he favoured her with such an equivocal look, that she stared in amazement. Her wonder restored his composure. "Will you allow me the pleasure of taking wine with you? I have been suffering much for the last few moments, and fear I have been inattentive."

"Oh la, you do look pale. Dear me! I am so shocked you cannot think. Doctor Musters," she almost screamed to a dapper little man at the other end of the table, "Mr. De Roos is taken ill! do pray come and prescribe for him. If he should want bleeding I shall certainly faint! Are you better now?"

Had Mr. De Roos possessed the wishing cap of the fairy tale, Miss Carleton might have found herself transported to some desert wild, with Messrs. Elliott and Musters to contribute to her amusement; but, fortunately for all the parties concerned, Mr. De Roos possessed no superhuman means of accomplishing his wishes, and the young lady was preserved from so fearful a fate, to endure one but little preferable.

"What do you feel, my dear sir?" cried the little doctor to his new patient, with great glee, trying to possess himself of his pulse; "where is the pain?" There was a look and movement

of annoyance, and a flash of passion so slight, so fleeting, that few observed it.

"A pain near my heart, nothing more : and I am quite well now," replied Mr. De Roos, with a becoming degree of gratitude and confusion for the interest he had excited, and a careful withdrawal of his hand from the doctor's clutch.

This equivocal answer failed not to excite, perhaps, as intended, considerable merriment amongst the company in general, with a caustic remark from Mr. Dalton, "that such pains seldom lasted long;" and various witty remarks from young gentlemen, with corresponding smiles and blushes from young ladies.

"Are you really better, though?" inquired Miss Carleton in a tender tone.

"Thank you, quite well now. I am subject to these sudden attacks of the heart."

"Then I suppose it is the same you had the first day you saw me?"

The laughter was renewed, and the invalid, vexed as he was, could scarcely retain his gravity, whilst above the general noise could be distinguished Mr. Dalton's sarcastic recommendation of "a clerical instead of a physical doctor for a cure of all disorders of the heart."

"La ! now, how can you all be so silly ? I am sure I did not mean anything."

“No one ever suspects you of such an indiscretion,” said Mr. Dalton ; and the young lady’s vexation became real, as the laughter rose higher than before.

Having no inclination that his name should be coupled with Miss Carleton’s, and made a subject of ridicule, Mr. De Roos, by offering to help Mrs. Throgmorton to a pine, and then commenting on its appearance, soon succeeded in turning the conversation on the general beauty of the fruit adorning the banquet.

“Elliott,” said he, across the table, “you had better send me that pine, and let me help Miss St. Maur. Bad carving spoils these superlative luxuries, and I have had more experience in cutting them up than you. I flatter myself I have a talent for it.”

To the unobservant there was nothing but easy good nature in this address ; to the more acute there was an assumption of superiority, the more galling as being too slight to be noticed, and the more unpleasant to one unaccustomed to society, as directing all looks towards him. There was an encounter of eyes across the table, and De Roos turned away for an instant to address his fair neighbour. Then desiring a servant to bring the pine, he spoke again :

“Do pray ! my dear fellow, let me have it.

I cannot bear to see you cut it up in that style ; it makes me quite nervous."

An angry retort rose to Elliott's lips, for he read something sinister in the speech, but he checked it, and was silent. Alford was too much engaged with Miss Grey to notice his embarrassment ; Mr. Dalton and Helen were the only two who felt for his situation ; the former was too curious to see how he could extricate himself, to offer any assistance ; and the latter, though indignant at the attack, and able and willing to defend him if absolutely necessary, shrunk from the task with a reluctance never felt before, and appealed to him with a look for his own exertions. The servant's hand was on the dish, and the triumph of De Roos seemed complete. A sullen and awkward compliance, or an angry denial, was all that was wanting to decide the point, and his eyes shone with more than their usual brilliancy. But the brightest anticipations may be disappointed. That appealing look had not been lost, and he spoke with a tone and a manner almost as self-possessed as his enemy's.

"No, no, De Roos ! you may be an inimitable dissector, but I shall not resign the high honour awarded me without an appeal. What say you, ladies and gentlemen ?" appealing to his

party, "my plain way of cutting up, or De Roos's more insidious and courtly mode of destruction."

"Your plain way. We hate any thing insidious," answered Alford and Mr. Dalton, whilst Helen's look was triumph indeed.

De Roos shrugged his shoulders, bowed, and gave up the point; and most of the company came to the conclusion, before they left the table, that this consideration had been for his dependant, and effected somehow or other by Miss St. Maur to please him. It is a mark of real genius to turn a defeat into a triumph!

"Why, Susy, I don't see that Mr. Elliott cuts up a pine worse than other people."

"It must be so, Mamma! or Mr. de Roos would not have observed it. He is sadly deficient in that delicate tact, that insinuating softness which bespeaks the sensibility of a sympathetic mind." Such a reply and such an authority were unanswerable.

Mr. De Roos was one of the first to enter the ball-room, and winning his way through "nods and becks, and wreathed smiles," he took his station beside Miss St. Maur, who was too much fascinated by his conversation to think of much beside.

"They are forming for a quadrille, I see; will you honour me with your hand? I had

hoped to attend you in to supper; but the Fates were cruel, and I could only pity you for having such a neighbour, and admire the good nature with which you bore the infliction."

"It is a sad thing that your pity and admiration should have been wasted; I was more than content."

"I know not how to thank you! Will you permit me to lead you to the dance?"

"I should have been very happy; but I am engaged several deep."

He looked the disappointment he felt.

"I know I must not presume to ask to whom, or to how many."

"I never utter a falsehood, even to get rid of a disagreeable partner, and will therefore answer."

A something rather emphatic in her tone, and a coldness in her manner, set Mr. De Roos thinking, and a moment's thought was sufficient for one so acute.

"Pardon my unwarrantable question, for which the depth of my disappointment can alone plead excuse. What a noble rebuke is your conduct to my selfishness, in having declined the hand of one little favoured by beauty or fortune! But who can hope to equal you? As a proof of my repentance, I place myself at your disposal for the rest of the evening."

Who shall be my partner for the next quadrille ? ”

All this was very flattering, and the look and manner were in strict accordance with the words ; besides, the world considered a falsehood in such an affair perfectly justifiable, therefore his frank avowal of error was the more pleasing ; yet she refused the task assigned her.

“ Nay, Mr. De Roos, it is not for me to control your opinions or actions. As you see your errors, you can yourself amend them,” and she walked to the other side of the room, for the purpose of introducing Elliott to Miss Mason. “ Mrs. De Roos may pine for the offer rejected by Miss St. Maur,” muttered the person she had left to his own thoughts.

“ Do me the honour of introducing me to Miss Mason, Elliott.”

“ Miss Mason, Mr. De Roos,” replied that gentlemen in surprise ; a surprise increased when he heard him ask her hand for the succeeding dance.

“ A reform, or a scheme ? ” questioned Mr. Dalton aloud, as if interpreting Helen’s look.

“ The charge of hypocrisy is a penalty the erring must pay when they would mend,” remarked De Roos humbly.

“ Do not mind Mr. Dalton’s words,” said Helen, “ he knows he is a privileged per-

son, and keeps up those privileges lest they should be lost. He can hear the grass grow, with Wordsworth; in short, can see, hear, and feel, what few other simple mortals can; not only what is, but what is not; and, having once been in a court of justice, he has considered himself ever since bound to proclaim at all times, and in all places, 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth;' yet to those who have nothing to hide, he is the kindest and truest of friends," she added, looking up in his face with all the love and confidence she had placed in him from childhood.

"A sop for Cerberus!" twinkling his piercing grey eyes to disperse a tear. "I am not the only one who takes advantage of privileges, it seems to me; she knows I never quarrelled with her."

"Ay, but then you know I never give you reason."

"Not by your description just now?"

"Not at all! You know it is the character you wish to bear."

"Say rather what the vices of the world have forced upon me."

"I know of old it is of no use to argue with you on this point,—

'A man convinced against his will,
Is of the same opinion still.'

So I shall not waste words, but to the dance, if my partner have not forgotten his engagement."

"That could not be!" said De Roos. Then looking round, "I see he is detained by that horrid bore. 'A Marmion to the rescue, ho!'"

"What do you think of that young fellow?" enquired Mr. Dalton, abruptly.

"Nothing! Young ladies never think of young fellows."

"Psha! The matter may be more serious than you choose to think. Frankly, what is your opinion of his character?"

"Frankly then, I have not quite made up my mind. There is a mystery about him that I have not fathomed, and I can only say what I said oracularly to Alford, he is better or worse, than most think him."

"This shall not baffle me. What do you think of him?"

"Barbarous man! Well then, as my Lord Marston would say, I am inclined to think—and imagine—that is to indulge a *soupçon*, 'Que jamais visage ne fut moins baromètre.'"

"And yet you allow him to engross your attention!"

"First, my curiosity is engaged to develop the mystery; then he is the very *causers* of *causeurs*. He always divines the matter on

which you would soonest converse, listens as if you were the Dalah Lama and he one of your worshippers, or you were uttering the oracle on which his fate depended; or only differs from you to be convinced by your argument. In short, insinuates more delicate and delicious flattery in one five minutes, than those other dull spirits," glancing round, "could utter plainly in five days."

"Helen! Helen!" shaking his head, "take care you do not prove the truth of Byron's satirical line:—

‘ Maidens, like moths, are ever caught by glare.’ ”

"But we have their own assertion that Poets best succeed in fiction, and hence the popularity of that line. Do not be alarmed, my kind Mentor, this will prove a matter of the mind, not of the heart.

‘ On n'est que plus près du danger,
Quand on croit n'avoir rien à craindre.’ ”

Her partner's approach prevented any further discussion, and he led her off, smiling as she passed at Mr. Dalton's awful shakings of the head. Mr. De Roos not only danced with Miss Mason, and made the agreeable, but afterwards handed her and her aunt to their carriage.

"Will you not introduce me to your friend Miss Grey?" he enquired of our heroine, on

his return. There is a something of almost angel sweetness in her countenance, which cannot but interest, though her's is not my favourite style of beauty. I prefer more of mind and character. Elliott seems wonderfully taken with her; but we seldom agree as to beauty or anything else. I hope it is so, for I understand she will have a fortune, and as he has nothing, he must look for a bride with a portion, and she having no parents to interfere, and no station to maintain, birth might be no consideration to her."

"Miss Grey has no fortune. But what is Mr. Elliott's birth?"

"There is too much mystery to suppose it good, but he always shuns the subject, and either cannot or will not say anything about it. I pity him, for I fear he is ambitious, and must be disappointed: neither his talents or manners are calculated to balance a doubtful birth."

The approach of Miss Grey, and her subsequent introduction, prevented a reply in words, and even Mr. De Roos was puzzled to determine the meaning of a smile.

"Admire the justice of my punishment, Miss St. Maur. Miss Grey refuses to honour me with her hand."

"I am just going," said Miss Grey in a sweet voice.

“Going Annie! Do stay another dance, and be my *vis-à-vis* again?”

“If you would condescend to give me a good character, perhaps Miss Grey would honour me.”

“Mr. De Roos is the most delightful of talkers and the most polite of listeners, and no one can converse with him ten minutes, without being fascinated *de lui et de lui-même*.”

If there were anything equivocal in this character, any playful satire, the gentleman either did not or would not perceive it, but expressed the warmest thanks, as if delighted with the eulogy, and again pleaded, though in vain, for the carriage was at the door.

“But you have not found it so very disagreeable, that you will not stay,” said Helen.

“Oh, no! for you, and Lord Alford, and Mr. Elliott, have been so kind.”

“So kind that you will dance again at Helen’s fête?” said Alford.

“What do you mean? My fête is only for the poor.”

“I beg your pardon! it is for the rich too. I have been besieged by all the room to induce you to invite rich as well as poor, and I have pledged myself it shall be so. In fact, my character for persuasion rests on the decision; so there can be no debate.”

“How could you play me such a wild trick, I only celebrate my coming of age, in compliance with the wish of my parents, and as a thing done time immemorial in our family; and as I have no one to assist me in such an undertaking, you really must pay the penalty of your presumption.”

“I cannot possibly submit to such a degradation. They all say they will give you no trouble, but be quite satisfied with roast beef and plumb pudding, and you have only to appoint three or four aides-de-camp, and we will arrange every thing for you. Carleton offers to ride a race with his horse Conqueror on the occasion; Miss Jones has indited a sonnet with delicious sympathies, souls-harrowing emotions, and so forth; and Mrs. Carleton has promised her advice.”

“Three good and sufficient reasons, I am sure, for declining the plan.”

“No! no! you must not: the whole county expects it, and even my mother says she will go if possible; it is bringing the rich and the poor together, and encouraging a kindly feeling between them.”

“Then I am to have no voice in the matter, it seems?”

“None whatever; so you have only to choose your aides-de-camp.”

"If I might venture to solicit for the honour, on the plea of having assisted to arrange such an affair before?" said De Roos.

"Have you? then you shall be one certainly, and I of course; and who shall be the others? Oh, there is Ruthven!"

"Stay, Alford!" interrupted Helen, "you must allow me some little rule. I have known Mr. De Roos too short a time to think of imposing such a task upon him; of the assistance of yourself and my cousin, I shall gladly avail myself."

"I should not have presumed. But from having assisted at one before!" pleaded De Roos.

"Never mind! I dare say Helen's decision is according to etiquette and all that: but I do not see why we should be deprived of your services; so you and Elliott shall be sort of supernumerary aides-de-camp, assisting in the work without acquiring the name."

"I shall be too happy to assist Miss St. Maur to object to any conditions, and I suppose I may say the same for you, Elliott."

"I will not trouble you. Miss St. Maur can have no doubt on the subject."

"Well, then, it is a settled thing; and, remember, Helen, there is to be no change; and, as I am superior officer, do you, De

Roos, conduct Mrs. Roberts to her carriage, whilst I hand Miss Grey."

Thus was the whole matter settled, if not quite contrary to the wishes, almost without the consent of our heroine. She would have remonstrated, but feared, by so doing, to give the affair an appearance of greater importance. A word in private to Alford, and a determination not to consult De Roos, she thought would answer her purpose better than a dispute in a ball-room; but she had yet to learn, that a polite but determined perseverance, might win its will despite her wishes.

"You must introduce me to Mr. Elliott," said Mr. Dalton, "for I have an apology to make him."

"And I have my thanks to offer for a staff-appointment," replied he, laughing, for Helen had explained to him the strange mixture of kindness and severity that compounded Mr. Dalton's character.

"You deserve it, at any rate, for taking my pleasantry so well; but I did not even know your name when I answered that teasing woman."

"As you have declined my offer of introducing a partner, Mr. Elliott, I shall commission you to inspire Mr. Dalton with some

of your charitable sentiments;" and Helen left them to join the dancers.

"If I were young," said Mr. Dalton, "Helen should be mine, though I toiled as a galley-slave to win her."

"She would, indeed, be a reward for slavery itself; but, with her beauty, birth, and fortune, she will, doubtless, match highly."

"Very highly! for she looks for worth and sense. Helen St. Maur will never sell herself for gold or title."

The young man made no reply, but indulged in a reverie.

"Umph!" cried Mr. Dalton, in so loud a tone as to startle his companion, and destroy the beautiful tissue of golden dreams which he was weaving.

"What did you say, Sir?"

"Nothing! I was only thinking of Icarus."

"Well, Tindal, what think you of the heiress?"

"What all young men must think of the heiress of ten thousand a year. Why, her pearls would be a fortune to a poor man, and yet report says they are not a tenth part of the family jewels: half a dozen of us have determined on entering the lists, though they pretend she is invulnerable. She may keep

her heart, only give me her hand; though she is a fine creature, certainly. What say you, Mr. Elliott; do you mean to try your chance for jewels, woods, and consols, with beauty into the bargain?"

"Shame on the tongue could name her beauty and her jewels in the same breath; and fouler shame on the heart that could balance her fortune with her love."

"Hey day!" exclaimed Mr. Tindal, "what glowing cheeks and flashing eyes. Some raw country youth, I conclude, dreaming of unfading love, union of hearts, bliss in a cottage, &c. &c. Well, no one need fear him as a rival, at any rate; for the women do like handsome men," surveying his really fine person in an opposite glass, "and a romantic heiress is a thing out of nature."

"Who is that tall thin man in spectacles?"

"I think some one said it was a Mr. Wilkins. Was it you, Mr. Johnson, whom I saw speaking to him?"

"Oh dear, no! thank goodness; I know no one of the name of Wilkins," replied that gentleman, elevating himself a little more than usual on his toes, and joining in the laugh, which he never dreamt was to ridicule his folly, not to applaud his wit.

“ La ! don’t you know ! ” cried Mrs. Jones ;
“ why, that is the great Ornithogilum.”

“ Ornithologist, mamma ! ” whispered her daughter, with a slight frown ; then turning again to her gallant partner, she continued her former conversation.

“ How I envy you, Captain Montague Melville, the rapture of treading in the paths of glory, and emulating the brilliant achievements of the heroes of old ; shadowing the lustre of a Bayard and a Black Prince, and gilding your name with the undying glories of renown. How you must long for a war, to flesh your maiden sword ! how your heart must thrill at

‘ The rapture of the victory, the triumph, and the scorn ! ’ ”

Captain Montague Melville did not feel all the sublime rapture these things should inspire, but he bowed, appeared much flattered, and, despite a decided preference for a peace-campaign, attempted to look as enthusiastically heroic, as a round, fair, unmeaning face, with a snub nose, and light hair and eyes, would allow.

“ I am sorry to hear Mr. Mahon is ill ! ” said Mr. Johnson, desirous of further enacting the wit ; “ the *tic douloureux*, I understand,” glancing round for a laugh.

Mrs. Mahon coloured, and then turned pale.

“ I fear you have not lost your deafness, Mr. Johnson. Mr. Mahon is suffering from a severe head-ache,” said our heroine pointedly, aware the rather old young gentleman entertained a great horror of being supposed liable to any of the infirmities of age.

“ It was nothing but a cold, and has been gone some time,” said the abashed little man, shrinking back, and still more vexed when he saw Helen pay the Mahons particular attention.

“ Mr. Mahon ill, is he! oh dear, I am so sorry! suffering from a severe fall, I understand,” sneered Miss Carleton, who detested Mrs. Mahon; “ I will tell Dr. Musters to call on him to-morrow morning;” and, without waiting an answer, she turned again to the dance.

“ How well your daughter looks this evening!” remarked Mrs. Jones, in her most fawning way to Mrs. Carleton, whose stately demeanour always awed her; “ and you can’t think how Lord Alford admires her. He says she is *entété*, and quite jolly all over.”

“ I really do not understand you, Mrs. Jones,” replied Mrs. Carleton, reddening, and drawing up her long neck, to look still longer;

for, priding herself on her own bony figure, the embonpoint of her daughter made this speech more than a little annoying. "There must be some mistake; Lord Alford would scarcely make such a remark on my daughter."

"There is no mistake, I assure you; and he admires your turban as much, and said it was very superb, and something about heaping a horse upon a lion, which I did not quite understand."

"Nor I, either!" replied the highly offended Mrs. Carleton, rising to the very height of her grandeur, and looking as large as possible, to check the titter which was fast expanding into a laugh. Then casting a scathing look upon Mrs. Jones, she said, in her most pompous manner, "Lord Alford may call this wit, but I say it is impertinence."

"What do you say it is?" inquired the culprit himself, who had arrived in time to enjoy the mischief occasioned by the ignorance and mistakes of Mrs. Jones, and who could scarcely speak for laughing.

The highly offended lady gave no other answer but a withering glance, and swept by him with a regal step.

During the merriment this scene occasioned the music ceased, and a conversation, carried on in a recess near, between two persons half

concealed by the drapery of a curtain, became audible.

“It is all true, I assure you; for Mrs. Thomas told me herself, and she had it from Mrs. Johnson, who heard it from Mrs. Jones, who had learnt all about it—Mr. Mahon is to go to gaol to-morrow, and he has threatened to shoot himself, and cut his throat twice; and there are four men obliged to remain always with him; and Mrs. Mahon went down on her knees to the bailiffs to let her and her daughters come to the ball, and vowed she would poison herself if they did not consent. So one of the bailiffs came with them to be sure she did not run away with the jewels; and as they were obliged to be civil, Miss Mahon danced the second dance with him, and”—

“Hush! hush! Mrs. Mahon is close,” cried the other, looking from behind the curtain.

Mrs. Mahon had borne all the sneers and inuendoes of the evening with a calmness that, in a better cause, would have deserved the name of heroism; but this public and exaggerated *exposé* was too much for her fortitude. She would have passed it off as a joke, but her power was weaker than her will: her laugh became hysterical; the colour deserted her cheek;

and she would have fallen, but for the prompt assistance of Helen and Mr. Elliott. She was taken into an adjoining room; but it was long ere the endeavours of our heroine and her daughters could restore her to any degree of calmness. Adversity, a bitter, an agonizing draught even to the religious, was a shock and a destroying tempest to such a worldly mind as hers, and it was a sad thing to listen to her wild and almost frenzied ravings.

Her younger daughter, with all the buoyant spirits of youth, and owing her first ball to the circumstance, could not be expected to feel the full extent of the misfortune; whilst Caroline, with a deeper cause for grief than any guessed at, and feeling with acuteness the force of the blow, and foreseeing all the misery of the future, showed, in this hour of trial, the calm resignation of the Christian.

But Helen, the flattered heiress, the courted beauty, looked like the ministering angel of the party. Her tears mingled with those of Mrs. Mahon and her daughters; her gentle remonstrances soothed the former, and her smiles and kindness won all to hope.

After a time Mrs. Mahon became calmer, and wished to return home, but dreaded the taking leave, or encountering the looks of the

unfeeling. Helen promised to apologise for her, and then left the room to inquire for her carriage.

"Can I be of any use to you?" said Mr. Elliott, meeting her near the door. "I lingered here, thinking I might."

"Thank you! thank you! Inquire for my servant, and tell him to have Mrs. Mahon's carriage brought to the side-door, with as little bustle as possible. Do not tell any one she is going; but, if you can, bring Alford or Mr. Dalton to help to support her to her carriage, for she is still faint."

"A few minutes after there was a knock at the door, and Alford and Elliott announced all was ready.

"Send them away, I cannot see any one," cried Mrs. Mahon.

"We are only come to hand you to the carriage, which is at the side-door, unknown to any," said both gentlemen in a breath.

Their kind manner quieted her distress, and Helen leading the way through some dim passages and empty rooms, the carriage departed with its freight, remarked by few.

"Helen, you forget yourself in the distresses of others," said Alford, looking at her pale cheeks. "Sit down here a few minutes, and

recover yourself, whilst I get you a glass of wine."

Before he could finish speaking, the chair was brought, and Elliott had gone for the wine.

"Mr. Dalton," she said, when she had re-entered the ball-room, "I know you are an early riser. Will you drive me over to Bensted to-morrow by ten, and lend your assistance to settle something for poor Mr. Mahon."

"Psha! I suppose you mean to be such a fool as to help them, and then expect gratitude. I tell you there is no such thing, and I will have no hand in deceiving you. She will supplant you by manœuvring the next day, and put your house in confusion by meddling."

"This from you! when they are in such distress?"

"Nonsense! you want to make me as great a fool as yourself. Well, I will go, just for the pleasure of telling them what I think of them."

"Oh, certainly! for no other reason in the world," smiling archly. "Now, Alford, do find where Mrs. Throgmorton is, that I may say good night and retire. I hope you have found it a pleasant ball, Mr. Elliott."

"Pleasant! What a word! It will colour

my future fate, for good or ill: which remains to be seen."

"You forget I have already predicted you bright fortunes."

"I will hold that prediction as an omen of success, and this as its token," picking up a sprig of orange flower, which had fallen from her band, and his cheek glowed with more than a healthful crimson, reading a deeper meaning than was intended.

"The Elliotts and Armstrongs ride thieves a'a! as in olden times, I see," remarked Mr. Dalton.

"May I not hope for your hand now, Miss St. Maur," entreated De Roos, "I thought your absence would have been eternal."

"The scene I have just witnessed must prevent all further idea of gaiety for the evening."

"I fear your health will suffer from the nobleness of your nature," he said, changing his tone in instant accordance to her humour.

"Not at all. It is good for me to witness scenes of sorrow, that I may be grateful for my innumerable blessings."

"Good night, Helen!" said Lady Catherine, as she passed on her way to the carriage. "I congratulate you on the title you have acquired. The gentlemen call you the 'Refuge for the

Destitute,' and all the bores and beggars reckon on you as a *dernier ressort*."

"It is fortunate they have such a refuge," replied Helen, smiling; "Good night."

"Did you see any thing particular in Miss St. Maur's conduct to Ruthven?" enquired De Roos of Elliott, when they had nearly reached Colville Lodge."

"No! Why do you ask?"

"Because they say, with his doubtful birth, he had the presumption to aspire to her hand, and she was obliged to repress his impertinence rather pointedly. She neither seeks for wealth or rank, I understand; but no consideration will induce her to overlook a clear descent—a grandfather at least, if not a great one. I thought you might have observed something of this."

"I saw nothing of the sort," replied his companion as coldly, appearing at the moment to be most intently occupied in watching the effect of the moon-beams on a piece of water; no singular occupation for an artist. Perhaps his ignorance of the matter was less extraordinary than his knowledge would have been.

Let it not be supposed these were the only two of that gay company, who made our heroine a subject of discourse on their return

from the lively scene. All the world, (every one knows who "all the world" means,) decided that De Roos was likely to prove the favoured lover, and that Elliott was considered an object of pity and protection by Miss St. Maur, for his sake.

CHAPTER IX.

“ The limits of the sphere of dream,
The bounds of true and false are past ;
Lead us on, thou wand’ring gleam !
Lead us onward far and fast,
To the wide, the desert waste.”

GOETHE.

“ Good morning !” said Mrs. Jones to Mrs. Johnson and her son, as they met on the high road to the town of ——. “ Rather a doubtful day, I am afraid ;” for even gossips find time to discuss the weather.

“ It matters little now, so it does not rain on the day of the Hurlestone fête. It is to be a very splendid thing indeed, quite to outdo Mrs. Throgmorton’s dance ; the same people to manage it, and the cost to be three thousand pounds.”

“ Oh, no !” said Mrs. Jones, “ you are quite wrong, I assure you ; but I don’t at all wonder at your mistake. There really is no

believing any thing one hears! I am quite astonished sometimes at the stories that get about, and wonder how people can repeat them; but I can tell you every thing, for I had it from Miss St. Maur herself yesterday;" and she looked very grand at possessing such exclusive intelligence. "No persons are to be employed but those in the neighbourhood, and the people are to come at ten, and go at eight; and there are to be cricket matches, and races, and dancing, for the poor; and archery, and what not, for the rich; and there are to be one hundred tents pitched, and three thousand pieces of beef, and five thousand plumb-puddings; and the grocer has freighted a ship on purpose to bring home the raisins; and there are one hundred cooks employed, and Miss St. Maur is to be dressed in white, and to dance with the farmers' sons." Here the lady's voice sunk to a mysterious whisper; "and it will be announced at the fête that Miss St. Maur is to marry Mr. De Roos, and all the people are to drink their healths."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Johnson and her son, in a breath, "are you quite sure?"

"Quite certain, you may depend upon it; but then it is a great secret, and so you must promise not to say one word about it."

"Oh dear, no! we would not mention it

on any account. But what will her cousin say?"

"That is why it is to be kept secret. Some say he will shoot himself, and some say he will shoot them; no great loss if he did the first, for he is very disagreeable."

It need scarcely be said very little of this information came direct from our heroine.

"Well, De Roos is a fortunate fellow! I must congratulate him," said Mr. Johnson, wishing to have it believed they were on terms of intimacy. "One can't get a finished girl with ten thousand a-year every day; not but what I think her beauty is rather gone off, and I have had doubts of her temper lately."

"Why, yes; I think she is rather spoilt, and has become proud latterly," agreed Mrs. Jones.

As an aside, we will say that our heroine had been so disgusted with the conduct of both towards Mrs. Mahon, that she had shown her displeasure by shunning them ever since; and what mean mind can receive a slight, deserved or undeserved, and judge without rancour?

"Really she makes such a fuss with that Caroline Mahon, and I can see nothing particular in her."

"Is it really true that she drove over to them the morning after the ball, and paid a large sum of money to prevent their taking Mr.

Mahon to gaol, and that she lets them live in her cottage at Belmont, where the Danverses were, rent free, and that she takes them every where in her carriage."

"Quite true, and a great deal more besides," said Mrs. Jones, "for she gives them clothes, and fruit, and pigs, and sheep, and a great many other things."

Once for all, a lover of truth would do well not to believe more than one half of any report from Mrs. Jones, and not always that.

"A friend in need is a friend indeed!" sneered Mr. Johnson, jealous, as all mean minds are, of favours shown to others.

"Poor things! I am glad they have found such a kind friend. I think Miss St. Maur without an equal," remarked his mother, who, though dearly loving a piece of news, had not one atom of ill-nature.

"Any one could give away money if they had it," replied Mrs. Jones pettishly, for Mrs. Johnson was of too little consequence to command her respect. "And some people think it injudicious to pet up Caroline Mahon in that way, as I suppose she must go out as governess. She has had her with her all the last week; but then perhaps that was to employ Mr. Elliott, that she might have Mr. De Roos all to herself."

“What, has Mr. De Roos been staying there?”

“You might almost say as much. Scarcely a day has passed, since he has been in the county, but he and Mr. Elliott have been at Hurlestone, or else joined her in her rides and drives; and he decides every thing about the fête. My garret window looks out upon the grounds, and peep when I will, I always see her with Mr. De Roos on one side, and Mr. Elliott on the other, and Miss Mahon round by Mr. Elliott.”

“Indeed! Well, I understood from Miss Jones that Lord Alford was there almost as much as Mr. De Roos; and that she had overheard Miss St. Maur ask his Lordship not to encourage his coming, for that she did not wish to appear to follow his advice. And then his Lordship laughed, and said he would do all he could, but that Mr. De Roos had a way of having his will, despite opposition; and so I thought she might have had Miss Mahon and Miss Grey with her, to make his coming less particular.”

“Susy must have made a mistake, for I am sure I am right about her going to marry him.”

“Whose carriage is that?”

“Miss St. Maur’s, I declare; and see, Mr. De Roos and Mr. Elliott have galloped down that

cross road and joined her, and now are riding one each side the carriage. What do you think now, Mrs. Johnson? I dare say she is going to — and will take Mrs. Mahon. I am sure I have been wanting to go these three months!”

“I wonder if she will stop?”

She did not stop, and was so much engaged with some remark made by Mr. De Roos, that she did not even perceive them, and only Miss Mahon returned the bow.

“Helen St. Maur seems quite infatuated with De Roos; but we must make allowances,” remarked Mrs. Johnson, piqued at the oversight of the bow; but glancing round first, to ascertain no one was near to report the omission of the “Miss.”

“She does indeed!” replied Mrs. Jones, “and you see I was right; but remember, not a word!”

“Not a breath!” cried both. A promise kept till a good opportunity for disclosure arrived.

Who would linger in the dusty road with Mrs. Jones, when they could drive to the gay town of — with Miss St. Maur, Mrs. Mahon, her daughter, and Messieurs De Roos and Elliott? Not we, so behold us in a jeweller’s shop, with the whole party assisting our heroine in the choice of a purse-clasp.

“How beautiful! How lovely? What exquisite workmanship!”

“What has excited such enthusiastic encomiums?” enquired Helen.

“This gold chain,” said Mrs. Mahon, holding one out to view.

“It is one of the most beautiful I ever saw!” replied Helen.

“There is but one neck worthy of it,” remarked De Roos. “You must grant us the pleasure of seeing you wear it.”

“How I envy you the power to gratify all your wishes!” said Mrs. Mahon, in a desponding tone.

“Mine is indeed a lot to be thankful for; but with such superior blessings, do not envy me the power of buying a gold chain;” and laying it down, as she spoke, she turned to leave the shop.

Mrs. Mahon looked angry at the rebuke, slight and delicate as it was. “I did not envy you for myself, but for my children, as I had always intended to give Caroline something on her birth-day. But you will not go away without making the purchase? If you wait it may be gone.”

“You had better take it at once,” said De Roos; “it is too beautiful to remain long on hand.”

“ But I have no intention to purchase at all. I have already two gold chains, though neither is as elegant as this, and can find no excuse for buying a third.”

“ Is not its beauty a sufficient excuse ? and the good of trade, if you want anything more ? ”

“ Its beauty would be rather a temptation than an excuse, and though all should dress in some proportion to their means, I fear there is more danger of excess, than of the other extreme. I suppose I must say, as rich people do, ‘ I really can’t afford it. ’ ”

Mrs. Mahon, who had too much taste for dress and ornament to withstand temptation herself, and whose former insinuating manner gave place at times, since her misfortune, to a bitter feeling towards those richer than herself, remarked, with an appearance of ill humour, “ I am sure, Miss St. Maur, if you cannot afford it, I do not know who can ; with your fortune you might have ten gold chains. If I were as I used to be, it should not stay one minute longer in the shop ; ” then recollecting herself, as she met her daughter’s look, she added, in her former sweet tone, “ you would look so lovely in it, my dear Miss St. Maur. It even makes Caroline a beauty,” putting it round her neck. “ Come Mr. De Roos, try your persuasions ; you are irresistible.”

“You will not deprive your friends of the pleasure they anticipate in seeing you wearing this beautiful bauble?” pleaded De Roos.

Unwilling to continue the discussion from a feeling of delicacy towards Mrs. Mahon and her daughter, she ended the matter by saying, as she left the shop, “All this is high treason to our charms, Caroline; we will be admired without gold chains, or not at all.” De Roos had too much tact to say more, but Mrs. Mahon muttered loud enough to be heard by some :

“Stingy with such a fortune! Not buy the chain, yet tell her servant to procure a pine at any price!” Then correcting this querulousness, she was again the bland Mrs. Mahon of former days, still manœuvring to bring her daughter and Mr. De Roos together.

“Can I procure you an umbrella? or order your carriage?” enquired Elliott of our heroine, who had just taken shelter in a library from a heavy rain, which had overtaken her as she returned alone from a charitable errand.

“That would be sending you out in the rain.”

“Do not think of that. We northerns are not brought up delicately; only tell me how I can serve you. Had not the carriage better come here for you?”

“Perhaps it had, and I will dispatch a note

to Mrs. Mahon to that effect; and if, in the mean time, you will execute the errand on which I was speeding, (I would not entrust it to every one) and keep my secret, I shall owe you many thanks."

"Only name your wish, and I will do my devoir like gallant knight."

"Buy that chain, and place it in my possession unknown to any. Here is my purse!"

"Certainly!"

"You are not pleased with the commission. It is raining fast, so never mind."

"It is but a few paces distant, and I do not mind the rain."

"You do not admire the chain then!"

"Yes!—but ——"

"But what?"

"I may offend you."

"If you do not speak frankly, certainly."

"Well then, I admired the chain, but I more admired your self-denial."

"There was little self-denial in the matter; for I prize such things but lightly; and if I were not a little hurt that you could misjudge me thus, I should be more flattered than I might choose to tell, at your thinking me capable of bearing reproof. That is a dangerous flattery indeed, were it only from its rarity."

"Can you so readily and so kindly forgive

my error and my presumption? Such a judgment was unpardonable, for I should have guessed your intention; but I feared to find you less perfect than I had deemed."

"Away on your errand. If you play Mentor one moment, you play Syren the next. Even you cannot refrain from flattery."

"Shall I maintain the character you have given me, and say there can be no flattery to you?"

"No, no, no. Leave all those things to others; I hope never to hear any thing from you but truth."

"Believe me, you never shall!" and he went on his errand.

There was not much in this conversation; and yet it is doubtful, if for some minutes after, either thought much of the common affairs of this work-a-day world.

"As the rain still continues, and my barouche holds six, if you will honour Mrs. Mahon and myself with your company till we reach Belmont, we shall be delighted."

The gentlemen accepted the offer with many thanks, and the party proceeded on its way home, with only the delay of an order from Helen to stop at Marston Parsonage. They stopped accordingly, and Helen entered the house for a few minutes, with a parcel in her

hand, whose shape and scent proclaimed it to be a pine.

"There!" said Caroline, triumphantly; "I was sure she gave such an order for some kind purpose. If sparing for herself, she is even extravagant for others."

"You cannot think more highly of Miss St. Maur than I do," said De Roos.

"Perhaps not; but I doubt if you understand her."

"My dear, sweet child," interposed Mrs. Mahon; "you are so very amiable, and so warm-hearted, that you allow your affections sometimes to outrun your politeness. I am sure Mr. De Roos has too much penetration not to perceive all the excellence of our dear Miss St. Maur; but you know, my dear Caroline, no one is perfect."

"Not exactly, mamma; but it is not for us to see her faults, to whom her kindness is unwearied and unwearying, and whose most earnest endeavour seems to be to make herself the person obliged."

"It is so delightful to see young people grateful, though their gratitude may be a little exaggerated," remarked Mrs. Mahon, in a sweet tone, though inwardly vexed at the conversation.

"I was charged by Alford with more apolo-

gies for his absence, than I choose to recollect or report," said his sister, as she entered the drawing-room at Hurlestone, three days before the intended fête; "whilst my father, with the ponderous politeness of former days, has sent a note of excuse, which, that all things may be done according to strict etiquette, your butler will present in due time and order; and my lady mother sends her love, and she will certainly attend the festival."

"That promise reconciles me to all my fatigue."

"The fatigue of pleasure, I suppose you mean, as I understand your aides-de-camp are with you morning, noon, and night, including the staff officer of Mr. Dalton's appointing."

"If Lady Catherine Alford could blush at her own rudeness and want of feeling, she might have committed such a solecism in fashion, whilst alluding to the latter personage."

"No lectures, child, if you please. If men will be so hideous, they really ought to shut themselves up. I suppose Mr. De Roos takes him about as a foil. By the bye, my dear, when you become Mrs. De Roos you must bargain for his banishment, or I really cannot visit you;" and she fixed her large piercing eyes on Helen's face.

‘I wonder, Catherine, you are not weary of wasting your impertinence on me, and degrading yourself by such unfeminine remarks.’

“Heyday, child! What, affronted because I say your *protégé* is ugly, and you think all that has anything to do with him must be handsome? Oh! commend me to the over-head-and-ears in love of a country girl! Never blush so, simple one! though I begin to think blushing suits your style of beauty. Oh, here is Mr. De Roos, and I must congratulate him; but the bear is with him. I verily begin to suspect he must be Hans of Iceland, from his attendant. Keep the animal away, Helen, or I shall be tempted to be rude.”

“One word, Catherine,” and Helen laid her hand on her arm and detained her. “I expect no guest of mine to be treated with insolence whilst in my house; and I also expect, from your character and mine, no comment on idle and false reports.”

This rebuke had its effect, and Mr. Elliott’s bow was returned, if not with cordiality, at least without absolute rudeness; and the lady forgot her ill humour whilst listening to the agreeable conversation of Mr. De Roos, who, by Helen’s management, was also her neighbour at dinner.

“You look ill, Catherine,” said Helen,

kindly, after the ladies had entered the drawing-room ; “ is anything the matter ? ”

“ Only a head-ache, the consequence of a faint this morning,” she replied *brusquely*, “ and your guests are so noisy.”

“ Why, Mr. De Roos is a great talker.”

“ I have no power for an encounter of wits at present,” answered her friend sharply, “ and would be quiet.”

“ A very courtly dismissal, truly ! ” and Helen rose with a smile, to leave her.

“ Stay,” she said, as if suddenly changing her mind. “ I hear such marvellous accounts of your fête, I am as much amazed as Mrs. Jones herself. They say there are to be millions of tents, mountains of beef, and continents of pudding ; that Mr. De Roos is to play popular, as the future favoured ; and that Mr. Percy Dormer is to come down to shake hands with his rival, and be bridesman at the wedding ; or to shoot you or him through the heart, as may chance to suit his humour on his coming.”

“ Heaven forbid ! ” cried Helen, involuntarily turning pale at the thought, and not at first observing the speaker’s wild and searching look.

“ Which ? ” questioned Catherine hastily, still watching her every movement ; “ that he

should shoot you or De Roos? or that he should attend the wedding? or that he should come at all?"

"Each, and all," said Helen, earnestly.

"Then you do not wish him to come at all?"

"Oh, no! no!"

"Is this true? Why not?"

The wild and earnest tone in which this was asked, and the now evident agitation of the questioner, revived a former suspicion, and recalled Helen to composure. Pity for her companion made her answer frankly and instantly to this imperious questioning.

"My cousin and Mr. Dormer are so much inclined to be enemies, on account of some rudeness of the former, that I dread a second meeting."

"Do you fear for Mr. Dormer, or your cousin?"

"I fear for the temper of both, remembering what you told me of the former, and what I know of the latter."

Catherine turned away at these words, or the look which accompanied them, and seemed inclined to sleep.

"Why did you think Mr. Dormer was coming here?" asked Helen, in her turn.

“ I thought, being such a prodigious favourite, you would insist on his presence.”

“ I admire Mr. Dormer, but I have no wish to see more of him at present.”

Lady Catherine turned suddenly round, fixed her eyes intently on her, and then, as if satisfied with the scrutiny, again let her head fall on the cushion.

“ Then, this report was an invention, to obtain information, or answer some hidden end? Take care, Catherine, you may go too far!”

“ No more threats; I have been obedient once to-day, and that is as much as any reasonable person can expect. There, do not tease, there is a good child! I want to sleep. Perhaps Alford or Mrs. Jones said something about it.”

“ I shall ask Alford,” said Helen, convinced there was no hope of gaining further information from her.

Repose, or some other cause, wrought a wonderful change in Lady Catherine’s humour, for, in a short time, she became the life of the party, playing her part so well in the strife of words, that all were as delighted as amazed, and wondered how they could have ever thought her disagreeable. Even Helen, though knowing her better than the others,

was surprised; but seeing she shrunk from her inquiring look, her guesses as to the causes of the change were probably more correct than the lady would have wished. In the height of her unusual vivacity, she proposed a lottery of forfeits.

Lady Catherine drew first, and her chance was to act a charade, with a coadjutor. She claimed the assistance of Mr. De Roos, as one accustomed to the game; and the inimitable acting of both gained general admiration. Others drew—a song was sung—a story told, after many denials and excuses. A lecture on poetry followed, from De Roos, which could not fail to delight, so eloquent was his language, so graceful his manner, so varied and beautiful his quotations; and then Elliott drew, and his task was commenced. He was to sing to the guitar, and then receive and answer the compliments of the company.

“Admirable!” said Lady Catherine to De Roos. “It will be worthy the imitation of a Mathews! Fancy his long, scraggy, awkward fingers, rambling among the strings, whilst his gaunt figure, sallow face, and sinister wig, bending over the guitar, will be the very model of an ancient Troubadour—Videl himself, or his burlesque. Coming just after you, too, the contrast will be more delightful!”

This was not said so low, but that it reached the ears of our heroine, as well as the answering laugh of De Roos, and his "You are too severe upon the poor fellow!" whilst a glance at Mr. Elliott's face convinced her he too had heard it.

Indignant at this speech, and determined to save him from ridicule, she said, in a low voice, and with more of blushing and hesitation than on former occasions, "The guitar will not be fit for use," and walked towards a sofa, on which it lay, to fulfil her promise; but Catherine had seen the look and the whisper, divined its purport, and had snatched it up, and began tuning it before Helen could reach it, impeded as she was by the polite offers of De Roos to assist her.

"Now, Mr. Elliott!" exclaimed Lady Catherine, keeping it out of Helen's reach, "here it is! and we are all anticipating the song with great delight. Some tender love ditty, of course. As a favour, if you prefer it, you shall receive the compliments first, and sing after."

"For shame, Catherine!" said Helen, in German, believing no one else understood it. "How can you, for the paltry gratification of a laugh, occasion pain to another? Remember my former threat, and if you have one spark

of womanly or generous feeling left, aid me to relieve, rather than distress."

"Amiable protectress!" she replied, in the same language. "I must have my laugh, though you should turn me out of your house the next moment. Never fear! Mr. De Roos will forgive you for ridiculing his dependant." Then, without waiting a reply, she addressed the others in English—"Ladies and Gentlemen, most deeply do I deplore my inability to translate the truly eloquent speech just delivered by my highly-gifted friend; sufficient, it failed to convince me of the propriety of breaking through the rules of the game, and dispensing with Mr. Elliott's performance of his task. Having accomplished my own, I claim the accomplishment of all others, without prejudice or partiality; and I am sure Mr. Elliott will duly appreciate my motives, whilst the rest of the company will join with me against Miss St. Maur, and refuse to relinquish the anticipated pleasure."

"Oh, certainly!" cried several, and she looked triumphantly at Helen.

Our heroine was more angry than she could account for, but would not yield without a struggle, though with such force against her, and confused by some feeling she did not

understand, she saw there was little hope of success. Anger would have increased the difficulty; earnestness ensured defeat; assuming, therefore, an easy manner, she protested against the decision.

“ I appeal from Lady Catherine to those who have still tasks to accomplish. I claim the suffrages of the ladies, from the dread that they may be condemned to deliver a Latin speech; of the gentlemen, lest they should have to perform ‘ Cavalier seul,’ for ten minutes. I own I plead for myself more than others, and propose none should be condemned to perform what they will pledge themselves they have never performed before; or, at least, that they may appoint a substitute. I am sure all future performers will vote with me, and declare this resolution passed.”

“ Yes! yes! yes!” cried many.

“ Victory! victory! You are outvoted, Catherine.”

“ *Parler en ministre*;—do not halloo till you are out of the wood!” replied her friend.

“ I vote, as an amendment, that such shall be the law hereafter; but that, as Mr. Elliott drew his lot before its proposition, he cannot possibly be included in it. Miss St. Maur has, doubtless, very strong motives for wishing that

Mr. Elliott should not sing; but it is unfair we should be deprived the pleasure of hearing him from an unavowed reason."

"Certainly not! certainly not!" cried the majority; for the lady had reckoned wisely on the votes of the selfish.

Helen coloured high at the insinuation, and was on the point of making an indignant reply, when the object of the discussion, who had not before spoken, stepped forward into the little circle that had crowded round the speakers, and fronted Lady Catherine and De Roos, with an air so proud and dignified that both drew back involuntarily.

"Miss St. Maur's motives for seeking to change the judgment against me, must be understood by every feeling mind; she sought to save a guest from insult and ridicule; that she failed, should be a sorrow, rather than a triumph. Whilst I bow to the decision of the majority, as Lady Catherine imagined, I fully appreciate the motives of all who have taken part in this discussion;" and, with a haughty look at her ladyship, and a contemptuous one at De Roos, he took the guitar, and stepped back from the circle.

As he passed our heroine, to take his seat in a recess, he whispered in German, and with a

look which spoke more than lips could say, "Fear not for me! I shall not disgrace your kindness."

This sudden appearance, and taking part in the discussion, when he had not spoken before; his look and manner, so totally different from his usual quiet reserve; and his retreat from the circle, as abrupt as his entrance, surprised and kept all silent. Glance met glance, as if to ask whence this change: but before a word was spoken, a rich wild symphony was heard, and then rose 'Riego's March,' with its Spanish words, in all its depth and beauty. The heroic victim himself, or his gallant friend who wrote, could not have sung those words with more force or feeling. The critical might have said the voice wanted cultivation; those who had hearts would have felt no such want. It was no amateur performance; no delicate piece of coxcombry. So completely had he lost his own identity, that it was rather the passionate breathing of a patriot chief, calling on his countrymen to follow to victory or death, than the song of an English gentleman in a lady's drawing-room.

Before any had recovered their surprise, or could say one word in praise, the singer was again fronting Lady Catherine, and with the

same calm, dignified mien as before, announced his readiness to receive and answer her compliments.

There was in his high bearing and passionate style of singing, so much in accordance with the better parts of her own character, that all desire to ridicule or distress was instantly lost in approbation, as imperiously expressed as had been her former determination.

“No, Mr. Elliott! you have performed the first part of your task so much to the delight of all, that our compliments must be but an echo of each other. We acquit you, therefore, of the second part, and claim another song as a reward for our clemency.”

A slight look of surprise, passing away almost instantly, was the only change visible on Mr. Elliott's features, as turning to the rest of the party he said, —

“Am I to understand that all acquit me?”

“Yes, yes, all!”

“Then am I quite free! for you can claim nothing on the plea of clemency;” and with a cold bow to the lady he turned away, exchanging a look with our heroine as he passed, which needed no words to express its meaning.

Lady Catherine bit her lip, at this open but gentlemanly rebuke of her haughtiness and

rejection of her condescending notice, but recovered herself instantly.

“The man is wise! Had he chosen a less judicious moment for his display, or were he to repeat it, the effect might be lessened.”

“Lady Catherine Alford does me too much honour. I can lay no claim to the wisdom for which she gives me praise, since her commands alone made me a performer.”

“The lady looked still more surprised at his presumption in answering her; and the cold but polite manner in which the answer was given; and then turning to De Roos bade him proceed with the game.

“What excuse can you make for having so artfully concealed your talent?” asked Helen, unheard by others.

“Perhaps I prefer the bear to the monkey?”

“That might furnish some excuse at another time, and to another person;” and she looked half reproachfully, “but this evening, when one word would have spared —”

“Do not condemn me,” he said, interrupting her; “all passed so quickly I scarcely understood the matter before I spoke; and but indulged one little moment in gratitude. Believe me, I would not have pained your delicacy had I possessed a quicker wit, though

could I have avoided the exhibition I should have preferred it. I have not touched the guitar for months, and owe my success more to the deep impression made on me by the song, when sung by an exiled patriot, than to any skill of my own. A talent for the guitar is rather a dangerous possession for one unused to the voice of flattery ; and I agree with her ladyship, that my scraggy fingers, and gaunt figure, are not exactly calculated for the instrument ; moreover, with the pride natural to those reared in solitude, I have, as you know, a more than due horror of making myself ridiculous."

"However eloquent your defence, I must not quite acquit you ; or you may play the discourteous a second time, and refuse to let me hear that song again."

"Discourteous to you ! believe it not ! Had you but looked a wish, it should have been complied with."

"And you would have spared Catherine the rebuke, and appeared to obey her summons."

"Judge me not so ill as to doubt it. I might not choose to play the puppet to gratify her caprice. But for you : command, and I'll obey you."

"Most gallantly promised, and I shall prove your sincerity by claiming that song the first convenient opportunity, and insisting on

your telling me the tale of the Spanish Patriot."

"I am too much flattered to attempt excuse, which exemplifies the danger of the talent, and if I can but interest you for the poor exile I shall thank Lady Catherine for forcing me to sing."

"I am interested in all exiles, for every evil must be light compared to that. Is he in distress?"

"He toils day and night to procure comforts for a dying brother."

"Write his address, and what will best serve him, and leave it on that table."

"How shall I thank you?"

"By always claiming boldly for the unfortunate; and not thinking the favour shown to you, but them," she added playfully, as she turned away from his gaze.

Meantime the game had gone on. A proverb had been drawn, and two had left the room to arrange a plan for its acting.

"What a dreadful accident of Mr. Dormer's," said Mr. Mahon across the room to our heroine.

"What was the name of the surgeon of whom you spoke so highly the other day? I would write to Sir James Watson, to beg him to recommend him; but he was such a favourite

of yours, I dare say you have done it long since ;” for Mr. Mahon believed every one else as fond of recommending and interfering as himself.

“ What accident do you mean ? ” inquired Helen eagerly, turning pale as she spoke, and forgetting in her interest for him, how her eagerness might be construed by others.

“ Is it possible you have not heard then ? I understand he has broken a leg and an arm, and put out his shoulder, besides some severe bruises, and is not expected to survive.”

“ How and when did this happen ? ”

“ I ’ll tell you all about it ; ” and Mr. Mahon began a long rigmarole about recommending horses, and not recommending horses ; what should have been done, and what should not have been done ; with various other matters, that made the story double the requisite length.

His tale, robbed of all meretricious ornament, was, that Mr. Dormer, with his wonted pertinacity, had persisted in conquering an obstinate horse, and as his manner of so doing had not been very gentle, a fall had been the consequence, accompanied by the injuries before stated.

Helen listened in eager impatience ; her pale cheek and sympathising look furnishing matter of comment to all who were not engaged in

attending to Mr. Mahon. Before the round-about tale was quite concluded, something was thrown down close to Helen, and as she turned to pick it up, Mr. Elliott stooped at the same time, and whispered in German,—

“Lady Catherine is fainting, and her pride and womanly delicacy will ill brook an open exposure; whilst you lead her from the room I will make a confusion.”

A look of thanks showed she understood him, and before she could reach Catherine, a backgammon-board was thrown down, and the men rolling about in every direction.

“I am certainly very awkward, or very unfortunate,” said Elliott.

“So I think!” remarked De Roos sarcastically, who had hoped to learn something from a longer perusal of our heroine’s countenance.

“See, you have frightened Lady Catherine into leaving the room.”

“My head aches—I would be alone—and without light,” murmured Catherine with great difficulty, as soon as they had placed her on a sofa in an adjoining room.

Helen dismissed every one else, placed the light on a distant table, but still lingered herself.

There was a fearful struggle between mind and body. Catherine was too proud, and too much accustomed to control feelings and looks,

to yield even at such a moment as this without a violent effort for victory; but even the strongest and the proudest must vail at times. She would have insisted on being alone, but the effort was too much; the lip became more livid, the eyes more glassy, and after a slightly convulsive movement she lay perfectly still.

Helen sprung towards the couch, sunk on her knees besides it, and whilst she bathed her temples with eau de Cologne strove to sooth and quiet her distress.

"Do not believe the tale. Mr. Mahon is apt to exaggerate; and Alford would certainly have heard, had this been true."

Catherine spoke not; but now, rather recovered, turned away from her companion's gaze, and with an impatient movement of the hand waved her from her.

"I will not quit you, dear Catherine, ill as you are. If you would but let your tears flow you would feel relieved; and only tell me where to find Alford, and I will send a servant instantly to inquire."

"Is it thus you triumph over me?" exclaimed Catherine, starting from the couch. "You will send and inquire! you would tell me he loves you, and that you have no cause for shame. Shame! And why should I feel shame? Who says I love him? Would Lady

Catherine Alford give her love unasked? I hate him, and you know I do." Then changing her haughty tone to one of wild anguish, she continued, wringing her hands :—"Hate! hate Dormer! No, no, no. But he will die thinking I do. If he but guessed my love, and we could die together—" and shuddering and exhausted she fell back on the couch.

"Dear, dear Catherine, do not talk thus!" said the weeping Helen, throwing her arms around her. "He will not die; believe it not."

"Then your triumph will be but the more complete: you will see me scorned, and you will offer pity. But beware! I am not yet fallen so low! They shall see no tear; they shall hear no word; and who will believe your tale? The whole world knows I detest him: and how know you the contrary?"

"This is unkind, Catherine. Why think I should triumph?"

"Because you cannot love me; and I would have triumphed over you. Now do your worst," she added, in a wild and desperate tone; "go and proclaim my shame; but remember, death will follow!"

Helen was shocked. Catherine was suffering from the agony of wounded pride, more even than from the fear of his death. Her love was passionate, but her pride more pas-

sionate still. Yet was this no moment for reproof, however gentle; the wildness of her looks, and the threatening of her words called for soothing.

“Do not think of such fearful things, dear Catherine. If I have loved you hitherto for your dear mother’s sake, hereafter let me love you for your own. I am not your rival; and your sufferings may well excuse the past. Fear not to weep; you shall never find a truer friend.”

Catherine was softened, but not quite subdued.

“Dormer loves you?” she questioned, with her wild eyes glaring on her.

“I love not him.”

“Will you bind yourself never to wed with him?”

“I will; for you will be secret.”

“You could reject his love? Then you must love another.”

“No.”

“No! Yet receive his love with coldness! But you cannot love; you are too cold, too prudent. Or you had some reason?”

“I trembled at his passions, and despised not your warnings.”

“Warnings and omens! I despise them all.

I said you were too cold, too prudent. Yet you sigh; is it for him?"

"Rather for you."

"Then spare yourself the trouble. My fate is linked with his for good or ill. For ill, indeed! even now he may be dying."

A low knock was heard at the door.

"I will see no one!" exclaimed Catherine, hiding her face in the sofa.

"It is no one who would enter needlessly," answered Helen.

"She left the room for a few minutes, and when she returned a smile and a blush seemed contending for mastery.

"Fear not, dear Catherine; Mr. Dormer suffers from nothing more than a slight bruise on his arm."

"Thank Heaven!" and Catherine's head rested on Helen's neck, as she knelt beside her, and the tears which had been restrained before now flowed freely.

"How know you this?" she questioned after a time.

"Mr. Throgmorton, who had left the room to arrange his proverb, on his return showed a letter from a friend, written the day after the accident, giving the whole account, and franked by Mr. Dormer himself."

The tears were soon checked, and Lady Catherine looked almost herself again.

"Now you are better, shall I order your carriage, or what will you do? For I should return to the drawing-room to hush suspicion."

"I will accompany you, that will best silence the talking of evil tongues; and now I think of it, was there not a noise to which I could attribute my fainting? What was it?"

"Mr. Elliott threw down the backgammon board," said Helen coldly and reprovingly.

"The very thing," replied Catherine, not choosing to remark her manner; "the annoying him will prove I am quite myself again."

"Indeed it will, more than your friends could wish. Will suffering never teach you forbearance?"

"No moralizing; I must have my way to-night," shunning her look; "besides, Mr. Elliott refused my offer of conciliation, and, I dare say, bears malice, as the old nurses say, so deserves punishment; and for once you must yield him to my vengeance. You see he can defend himself. Let me pass, for I am impatient to begin the play; and never look so indignant, child! or we must take to quarrelling again. You know, in the time of Good Queen Bess, the most delicate ladies found great delight in a bear bait."

"You pass not hence, Catherine, till you have heard that, which but for your ungenerous determination should have been kept secret," said Helen firmly, resisting her effort to pass.

"Have done with chiding, then, and out with the mighty secret. Has this northern light an inclination to illumine my hemisphere? or does he think his guitar would sound gallantly amid the woods of Hurlestone? for I conclude it is concerning him you would speak. If the former, say I dread contact with a meteor: if the latter, you shall have my best offices to persuade the world that it is no preposterous match, but on the contrary, a well-assorted union."

"I have too high an opinion of his judgment to suspect the former, and too low an opinion of my own worth to imagine the latter."

" "Oh, many a shaft at random sent,
Finds mark the archer little meant.' "

"Catherine, this is folly."

"*Tout au contraire!* your blushes speak volumes. Shall the wedding be a pink one, or a blue one, or a white one, and when shall I send to Paris for the orange blossom? You have not decided yet. Well then, we will talk about it some other time, for I comprehend it fully, and will get Mr. De Roos to assist me in

arranging it. What will Alford and your cousin say? Perhaps they might forbid the banns. To prevent this, what think you of a runaway match, with a demure chaperon, a lady's maid, and footman, to propitiate the dowagers?" and she tried to pass, whilst distracting attention by her fooling. Her plan did not succeed. Helen spoke not, but she laid her hand on her arm, and looked gravely and steadily in her face. It was impossible to mistake the regret and reproach conveyed by that look; even the haughty Lady Catherine Alford felt its power, and attempted a defence.

"Would you have me proclaim my shame, and ask for pity and contempt? Would you have me bare my feelings to the curious and impertinent, and become a mock to the flip-pant and the vile? Would you have me break down the barrier that stems the tide? And who would control the torrent if I should?"

"I would have nothing shown that woman should conceal. But why feign this levity to me? Would you have me believe the past a fancy or mere delusion, and that you neither dread nor suffer?"

Catherine would fain have persuaded her of this if she could; but the effort was beyond even her. She shuddered as she remembered

her dread for Dormer, and for a moment her eyes sought the ground : then rallying, she said :

“ To conceal—but not to feign. On my word, I am too little of a metaphysician to delight in such delicate distinctions ; so suppose we defer the discussion, since a speedy return to the drawing-room would be an act of wisdom in both. I will consider of your reproofs, for I read your looks, and after I have worried Mr. Elliott to protect myself, try to be good.”

“ Is this the commencement of amendment ? Beware ! ”

Catherine was daunted by her companion's look and tone ; but, too angry to show it, and too proud to bend, she answered recklessly,

“ Beware of what ? I will hold parley no longer ! Out with it, in the name of all that is sublime ! Be it of love or hatred ! northern bear, or southern sheik ! ”

“ On your own head then, rest the pain. It was Mr. Elliott who relieved your anxiety ! ”

This one sentence was sufficient. Lady Catherine comprehended all it would convey : she looked wildly round, suppressed a faint shriek, and then, sinking into a seat, covered her face with her hands.

“ Catherine,” said Helen, throwing her arms

round her, and forgetting all her indignation, "Forgive me, I would have spared you, but you would not let me."

"Away!" replied Catherine in a fierce tone. "You have betrayed me, and to one who will seek revenge." Then recovering herself with a violent effort, she rose, made a motion for Helen to pass from before her, and seeing her motion was not obeyed, and that Helen was about to speak, she fixed on her a contemptuous look, as she said in a haughty tone: "Further speech between us, Miss St. Maur, would be useless. You have done your worst, or will do it, for I am not one to sue. Lady Marston and Lord Alford will render thanks for your kindness to their child and sister; mine are worthless, or they should be yours. But I detain you from amusing your company with the detail. Order my carriage, and you shall have the sequel of the tale to-morrow: a right comic ending," and she smiled fearfully, as with a stately step she approached the bell.

The forced calm of her tone, and her studied words, formed a strong contrast with the wild glare of her eye, and the burning spot upon her cheek. Helen had been prepared for violence, but not for this; shocked and alarmed, she sprang forward to stay her from touching the bell, and would have taken her hand, but

Catherine repulsed her rudely, and heeded not her words.

The bell rang violently.

If she allowed her to depart thus, who could tell the consequences. Pride and passion, unchecked by religion, are workers of deadly deeds. The very emergency of the case supplied calmness and courage.

The servant entered the room, and before Catherine could give an order, had left it again, with a message from his mistress to her maid, concerning some eau de Cologne, as Lady Catherine was faint: a message delivered with such outward calmness and promptitude, that nothing but a slight agitation, quite allowable when a fainting fit is in contemplation, was discernible.

“Allow me to congratulate you on your improvement in feigning or concealing, as you would doubtless term it,” said her Ladyship angrily, and sarcastically; “but you can scarcely hope to cope with me, and I will not be detained.” Her hand was again extended towards the bell, but Helen stepped between.

“For your mother’s sake, for your own sake, you shall not leave me thus! I did not betray, and you have nothing to fear from Mr. Elliott, since to his kindness you owe the confusion that covered and accounted for your

faintness ;” and, without waiting for a reply, she related all that had occurred, mingling with the relation so many expressions of affection, and such strong pledges for the honour and delicacy of Mr. Elliott, with such encomiums on his generosity, penetration, and address, that before its conclusion Catherine’s arm was round her neck, and when she was silent, pleadings for forgiveness, and words of contrition fell from Catherine’s lips, almost for the first time of her life.

It would be waste of time to say with what warmth that embrace was received and returned, or how readily the forgiveness was accorded. Both felt this was no time to indulge in their feelings, as a quick return to the drawing-room, with as much calmness as they could assume, was desirable. But Lady Catherine’s pride, though quieted, was not conquered: that must be a work of time ; so after the first generous feelings had a little subsided, each moment placed her degradation before her in stronger colours. She cherished an unrequited love, and worse to one of her feelings, she had betrayed this weakness to the two last people in the world to whom she would have willingly revealed it. The one, though the playmate of her childhood, a person whom, despite her

many virtues, she had at times almost hated as a rival; the other a stranger, who had received nothing at her hands but bitter sarcasm, and ungenerous contumely. They might forgive: but would they not triumph?

What right had she to expect generosity? Her own heart condemned her—she looked steadily at Helen, and met with nothing in that look but what tended to re-assure her. She felt she might trust her—but Mr. Elliott! could she—ought she to trust him? She would not bend, and yet he had a right to expect it. She must brave him then, and trust to her own powers: but not to-night—no, she could not meet him to-night! How should she brook the shame of the meeting? yet better perhaps to brave him at once. She tried to resolve, but the effort was beyond her, and that proud heart again writhed with shame and anger. “Helen,” she said abruptly, “I am too ill to join the party; let me go now, and you must make excuses for me as you can, if Mr. Elliott have not, ere this, put excuse beyond my power.”

“That has he not!” replied Helen warmly. “You shall go home if you wish it, but not under your present impressions,” for the struggle had not escaped her penetration. “That there is much to pain your delicacy in Mr. Elliott’s

knowledge I do not deny ; but nothing, believe me, to awaken fear of further disclosure, for he is incapable of such baseness. Why should he draw attention upon himself to screen you, if he were capable of revenge ? One hint, however slight—even a look—and his triumph had been complete, without the odium of betrayal. If I could but describe his manner, his sympathy, the delicacy with which he turned all suspicion aside, you could doubt no longer. Besides, he knows not you are aware of his knowledge, as, but for yourself I should not have disclosed it ; and surely, Catherine, you may depend on me ? To return and listen with calmness to the conversation, which, to avoid suspicion, I must originate, is a measure too bold for me to propose to any but yourself, yet will it free you from much anxiety.”

Catherine felt the truth of this, but it was a great effort, and she hesitated.

“And he will require neither explanation, apology, or thanks, by word or look, or sign ?”

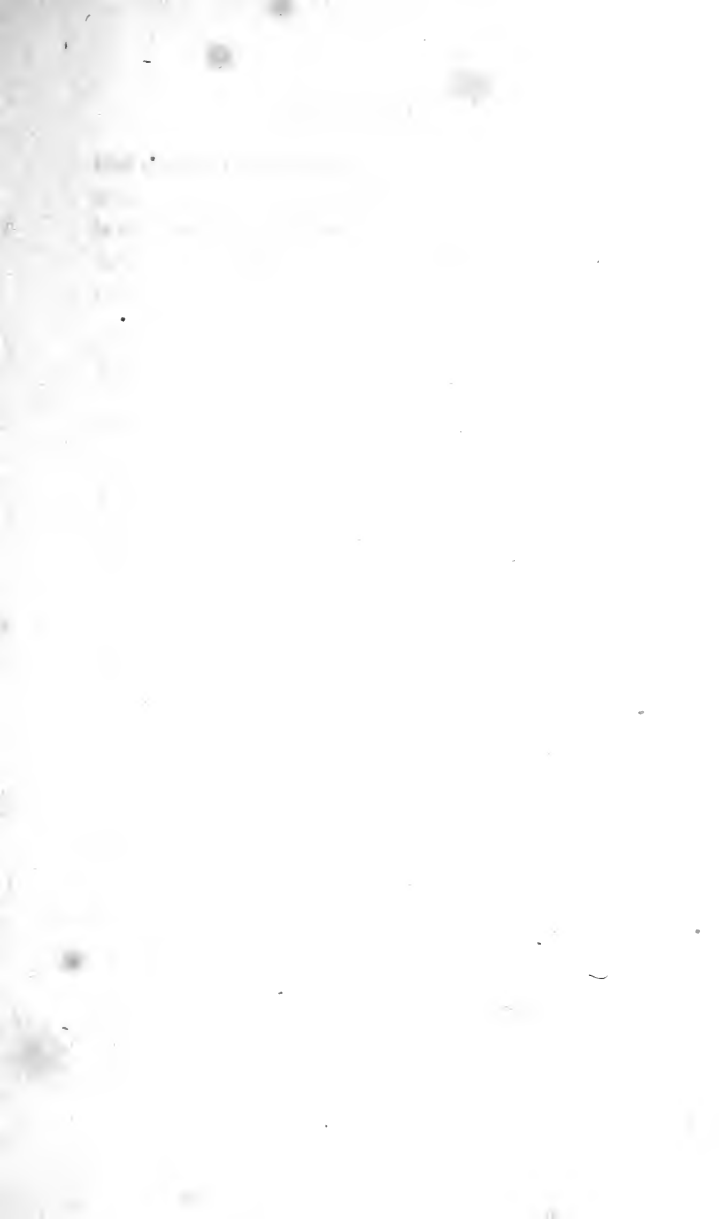
“Neither of all these ; only a little common politeness. I must bargain for that,” replied Helen, smiling.

“I will not call you an angel, for that is what the gentlemen call us, when they mean to deceive ; but I will say you are the dearest and kindest of human beings, and you shall see

how civil I can be. One minute to recover, and not a person shall suspect."

"I hope it may be so," thought Helen; "but Mr. De Roos is not easily deceived."

END OF VOL. II.











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